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ITALIAN LIFE IN TOWN AND  
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THE POPE IN PROCESSION

# ITALIAN LIFE IN TOWN AND COUNTRY

BY LUIGI VILLARI

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NEW YORK AND LONDON  
The Knickerbocker Press

1903



THE PROCESSION

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# ITALIAN LIFE IN TOWN AND COUNTRY

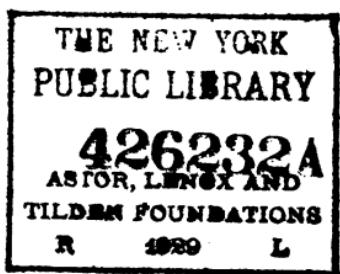
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### *A. Italian Writers.*

G. Alongi, *La Mafia nei suoi fattori e nelle sue manifestazioni.*

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N. Colajanni, "I lavoratori delle Zolfan in Sicilia," *Riforma Sociale*, January 10, 1894.

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Mrs. J. Ross, *Italian Sketches*.

R. A. Streatfield, *Masters of Italian Music*.

A. R. Willard, *History of Modern Italian Art*. 1898.

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# ITALIAN LIFE IN TOWN AND COUNTRY

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## CHAPTER I

### DIVISION OF THE POPULATION

ONE of the greatest difficulties in the way of studying Italy and the Italians, especially if we have to confine our observations within narrow limits, lies in the great differences of life, habits, character, and, to a certain extent, of language, which subsist between the inhabitants of one part of the Peninsula and those of another. The Piedmontese and the Lombards are not, perhaps, as different from the Neapolitans as they are from the English or the French, but still the difference is far greater than that between an inhabitant of Devonshire and a Yorkshireman, or between an Englishman and a Scotchman.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A popular saying is :

“ Tre fratelli,  
Tre castelli,  
Eccoti l’Italia.”

There are, of course, certain national characteristics common to the whole country and its people, and they tend to develop both in number and importance every year. It is no longer true that Italy is, as Metternich said, nothing but a geographical expression. She is one and united for good or for evil, and all Italians look upon unity as a *fait accompli* on which it is impossible to go back. They also feel that united they have a good chance of becoming once more a really great nation, that separated they would be less than nothing, and at the mercy of every ambitious and unscrupulous neighbour. Still, the divisions subsist, and it is absolutely necessary to grasp this fact if we are to understand Italian life.

If this difficulty exists to a considerable extent in the sphere of politics and economics, it is multiplied a thousandfold in the sphere of manners and customs, daily life and domestic economy. Hence, in the latter case, it is almost impossible to make a statement universally true of all Italy. What is true of Lombardy is false if applied to Tuscany or to Sicily. We may go even further, and remark that what is true of Florence and the Florentines is false of the Sienese or the Pisans. In no country in Europe are the local differences so marked as in Italy. The countless foreigners who yearly come to study its art are always struck by the variety of different styles and manners in architecture, painting, and sculpture. There is a Tuscan school of painting, a Venetian

school, an Umbrian school; even a Sienese school distinct from the Florentine and the Pisan schools; and the same thing may be said as regards architecture. This great variety contributes in no small degree to the charm and fascination which the country exercises over every one, and renders a tour through its cities an enjoyment of such absorbing interest. But few foreigners realise that these differences which they see in one or two artistic manifestations extend to the whole life of the people, and that there are Florentine schools of manners, of thought, of character, of cookery, quite distinct from those of Rome, Milan, or Naples. It is therefore necessary, when treating of many features of Italian life, to deal separately with the various parts of the country, and to avoid general statements as much as possible.

The main line of division is that between the North and the South. There is no absolute line of demarcation, as Central Italy separates the two; but, all the same, the North is undoubtedly very different from the South in every way. The North is industrial, prosperous, active, and progressive. The South is almost exclusively agricultural, and miserably poor. In the North political education is beginning to develop, and the keenest interest is evinced in social and political questions, while the South is apathetic and wanting in political instinct. The North has made a great advance in wealth, trade, and education, while the South is almost stationary.

The ignorance of the South is proverbial. The proportion of illiterates among the recruits in Piedmont was 14.98 per cent, in Lombardy 18.42 per cent; in the Province of Naples it was 51.37 per cent, in Sicily 55.04 per cent. In criminal statistics, too, the South enjoys an unenviable pre-eminence. In the years 1896 and 1897, the number of murders committed in Sicily per 100,000 inhabitants was 27.90, in the Province of Naples 24.53; whereas in Venetia it was only 3.18, and in Lombardy 2.92. The same disproportion applies also to other crimes. These differences, as is only natural, have produced a certain antagonism between Northerners and Southerners. The former, when they are in the South, are fond of speaking of their own provinces as "L'Alta Italia" (Northern Italy is generically called "L'Alta Italia"), in order to emphasise their superiority. They do not take pains to hide their contempt for their less progressive compatriots; they accuse the South of being the seed-plot of all political corruption, and say that the inertness and poverty of its inhabitants render the increased prosperity of Northern Italy of little avail. Heavy taxes are laid on the country, which North and South have to pay alike, but which are only necessary to pay for the idleness and dishonesty of the South. The South is the recruiting ground for ministerial majorities, as there the elections can always be turned in favour of the powers that be. On the

other hand, the Meridionali reply, with some show of reason, that if the industries of Piedmont and Lombardy are heavily taxed, the agriculture of the South is taxed still more heavily ; that the South has never been given a fair chance ; that the Government has always lavished its favours on the North, and promoted industry and trade, by means of protectionist tariffs and otherwise, while it has done nothing for the depressed agriculture of the South ; that the South pays much more than its due share of taxation, although it is so much poorer. Much more money has been spent on railways, schools, and public works in the North than in the South, where the need was much greater. Moreover, the Mezzogiorno is treated almost as though it were a penal settlement, and all the worst employees, those who have misbehaved or shown marked incapacity, are sent there, instead of the best men to educate the people. The South made great sacrifices for the union: its public debt was the lightest in Italy, and now it has to bear its share of the debt of the rest of the country.

At the moment of the union [Signor Nitti observes], the South had all the elements for transforming itself. It had a large extension of State lands, a considerable reserve of specie, and its public credit stood very high. What it was absolutely wanting in was political education ; what was required was to educate the middle classes and to form a political conscience. But an opposite course has been followed, partly from necessity,

partly from carelessness; above all, through the fault of the Meridionali themselves.<sup>1</sup>

There is some truth in both contentions undoubtedly. If the intelligent and progressive North is hampered by the dead-weight of the ignorant and backward South, it must also be admitted that the Mezzogiorno owes its condition to centuries of misgovernment, and that the North has done very little for its improvement.

Here and there Southerners themselves have achieved a certain amount of progress: Bari has become an industrial centre of some importance, and the trade of the port of Naples is increasing. But it is little in comparison with the vast wilderness of barbarism and ignorance in the rest of the Southern provinces. Moreover, what makes them appear so peculiarly foreign to North Italians is their appalling criminal record. Three phenomena of social pathology are characteristic and regrettable features of life in Southern Italy: brigandage, the *Mafia*, and the *Camorra*. In the Neapolitan provinces brigandage has very much diminished. Originally a political movement, instigated by the ex-Bourbon Government and by the Papacy, it was put down with a firm hand by the Piedmontese troops in 1861-62, and although there are now and then isolated cases of it in the wilder parts of Calabria and the Puglie, where ordinary crime is very common, brigandage

<sup>1</sup> F. Nitti, *Nord e Sud*, Turin, 1900, p. 9.

as an organised movement is a thing of the past. In Sicily, however, it still flourishes, and every year a very large number of murders and robberies are committed by bands of armed freebooters, who infest the rural districts. The motives of the brigands are not always robbery ; revenge and local feuds are often as much answerable for the murders as the desire of gain. Still, want is at the bottom of this form of crime, as poverty is the chief cause of the social and moral degradation of the people of Sicily, and of the hatred between landlord and peasant.

The *Mafia* is a phenomenon of a different nature. It is a sort of vast mutual-help society, to which an indefinite number of people belong, and whose object is to acquire influence and power by any means. Centuries of misgovernment, and, above all, the infamous Bourbon police systems, have created among the Sicilians an inborn distrust and hatred of authority. All private differences, according to the perverted and monstrous code of honour called *omertà* (literally " manliness ") should be settled privately, and no information should be given to the agents of the Government which may lead to the detection of the criminal. Tolls are levied by the *Mafia* on landlords, farmers, wine-growers, and orange-growers, and woe to him who refuses to pay the association its dues or to accept its members as watchmen of his property. The record of murders committed by the *Mafia* is appalling.

Sometimes whole families have been wiped out. In many of the towns the *Mafia* monopolises the communal councils, regulates all public contracts, brings pressure to bear on the judges and the jury to save a "companion" from paying the penalty of his misdeeds, and exercises a considerable influence on political elections. For many years the Government made use of it to secure the return of ministerial candidates, and hence was only half-hearted in the measures for putting down its tyranny. The *Camorra* is another criminal association, whose power is limited to the city of Naples. It is an organisation of thieves and other dishonest persons in all ranks of society, who practically "run" Naples. Its aim is to make money without working, and its methods are bullying and levying tolls on all trades and professions, from municipal tramway contracts, involving millions, to the management of the lowest disorderly houses of the city. Such being the state of social life in the Southern provinces, it is not surprising that the more educated and active Northerners should feel a certain contempt for the unfortunate Meridionali.

This is, as I have said, the main line of regional differences in Italy, but there are also other minor distinctions of character and habits which engender a certain amount of local jealousy. Thus we see the Piedmontese aristocratic, reserved, hospitable, steady, and industrious, while the Lombard is quick, business-like, rather noisy and fond of

chatter, and active. The Venetian is gossipy, lazy, artistic, and not particularly honest. The Tuscan is hard-working, sceptical, courteous, slow, conservative, but not exclusive, full of family affection, and frugal to the point of niggardliness. The Roman is reserved and dignified, but averse to hard work, and his passions frequently lead him to deeds of violence. In the South there is a considerable difference between the Neapolitans (*i. e.*, the inhabitants of the mainland) and the Sicilians. The former are gay, of great natural intelligence and adaptability, artistic, loquacious, superstitious, utterly wanting in self-respect, vicious, fond of a quarrel, especially if it ends in the law courts, and much given to outward show. They are often cruel and cowardly, but in great emergencies they can rise to a height of self-abnegation and heroism which has been rarely equalled. The Sicilian, on the other hand, is silent, and has more dignity than the Neapolitan ; he is more gentlemanly in manners and appearance, but he is vindictive and savage, and intolerant of all restraint. The Bourbon kings did their best to keep up the jealousy between the *Continentali* and the *Isolani*, on the Roman principle of *Divide et impera*.

In Central Italy the former division of the country into a number of City States has left its marks, which are visible to this day. Each little town for many centuries led its own independent life, had its own policy, its own manners and

customs, its own artistic development, its own parties, its own aristocracy, *bourgeoisie*, and working class, and each was a little world in itself. This communal particularism is to this day one of the most curious features of Tuscany ; it is more marked in the smaller centres, and local jealousies are often found to exist between towns separated by a few miles from each other. In some cases a small town is jealous of a large one, while the latter almost ignores the existence of the former. One of the most characteristic cases in point is the hereditary rivalry between Siena and Florence. In Siena the Florentine is looked upon almost as a foreigner ; socially he is not well received, and he is constantly reminded of past wars and struggles between the two republics. Above all, the battle of Montaperti, in which the Sienese defeated the Florentines in 1260, and for a moment obtained the hegemony of all Tuscany, is a favourite topic of conversation. The Sienese are fond of attributing any disadvantage, real or imaginary, under which they suffer to the hostile and unfriendly attitude of the Florentines. A chronic cause of bickerings is the bad train-service, which renders Siena somewhat difficult of access. Sometimes the Sienese affirm that its inefficiency is due to the machinations of the Florentines, who are bent on ruining the trade and industries of Siena ; at other times, when a projected improvement is seriously discussed, they oppose it, and say that

they will have none of it, lest the Florentines should come to Siena in large numbers, and obtain possession of everything worth having in the town. As at Siena there is neither trade nor industry of any sort, both contentions, to an outsider, seem somewhat futile. On the other hand, the Florentines regard the Sienese with the haughty disdain of inhabitants of a capital for their benighted provincial brethren, and, as a rule, take not the slightest interest in them or their affairs. The following story is typical of their attitude on the question: A Florentine barrister, whose business obliged him to dwell in Siena, was constantly being "heckled" about the harm which his compatriots were doing or contemplating against the "red city," and, as usual, the affair of Montaperti was brought up. Finally, after he had been subjected to this sort of thing for some time, he replied: "We Florentines never even remember the existence of Siena and the Sienese, except occasionally at Christmas, when we want to send a few *panforti* to our relations and friends."<sup>1</sup> I myself have known scores of educated Florentines who had never been to Siena, and knew practically nothing about it, although it is only forty miles from Florence.

Other local rivalries are numerous in Tuscany

<sup>1</sup> The *panforte* is a kind of cake made of ginger, almonds, raisins, etc., which is a Sienese specialty. It is frequently sent as a Christmas present.

and all parts of Central Italy. Pisa, Arezzo, Volterra, Montepulciano, San Gimignano are all remarkable for their *spirito di campanile*, as this feeling is called. The inhabitants of each town know little of what goes on outside their own walls, and care less. If you speak to a Tuscan of the lower orders, or sometimes even of the middle class, about some town of Tuscany other than his own, he will at once characterise its inhabitants by an epithet,—generally, but not always, uncomplimentary,—each place having certain typical features. Its buildings, too, he will criticise as inferior to those of his own town, but he will not always take the old ones as a standard of merit; his comparisons may be based on the superiority of the theatre, the chief *café*, the new *piazza* in his own town, although, of course, the Duomo and the Palazzo Pubblico are not to be despised. All Tuscans, however, except, of course, the Maremmani themselves, are agreed in despising the Maremma (the marshy pasture-lands between Pisa and Civitavecchia) and its inhabitants, whom they regard as miserable savages and inferior beings altogether. There are in a few Tuscan towns still narrower distinctions between the dwellers of one quarter and those of another. The most notable case in point is the rivalry between the *contrade*, or town wards of Siena. In Cortona and other places there are factions, and the members of one have no connection with those of the other. These municipal

jealousies at one time existed also in Lombardy, which, like Tuscany, was divided into many city republics; but modern life, better communications, and, above all, trade and industry, are gradually doing away with them. This same movement is suppressing the individual characteristics of the different towns, and will end by giving a more homogeneous tone to life in Northern Italy generally.

The causes of these local differences are, as I have said, chiefly historical. Italy, ever since Roman times, has been divided up into separate states, with many different forms of government. Some were republican, others monarchical; some were theocratic, others free from clerical influence; some states were for a long time under foreign rule, others were not; some were well governed, and enjoyed peace and prosperity, others were badly governed, and a constant prey to revolutions and wars. All these various dominations have naturally left traces on the peoples who were subjected to them. Thus the superior business ability and public spirit of the Lombard are due in part to Austrian rule, which, while it was oppressive and unjust in political matters, gave a healthy discipline to the people and an example of honest civil administration. On the other hand, many of the most regrettable features of Neapolitan and Sicilian life are the inheritance of the corruption and cruelty of the Spanish and Bourbon rulers.

Another factor which serves to maintain these differences is the language question. Every one in Italy speaks dialect. Each region has its own vernacular, and so marked is the difference between, say, Piedmontese and Neapolitan, that even a foreigner will notice it. Not only are the inflection and accent different, but a great many of the words, especially those of daily use, the construction, and to a less extent even the grammar, vary considerably. The different dialects are spoken not only by the common people, but by the *bourgeoisie* and the aristocracy. Even the late King and his father were wont to use the Piedmontese vernacular when speaking to people of that province. Literary Italian is only spoken as a common language by the inhabitants of the hill country between Pistoja and Bologna. At Florence, at Lucca, and at Siena, particularly at the latter place, the language is fairly pure, but even the inhabitants of those towns use local inflections and locutions which betray their citizenship. Among the upper classes in Tuscany pure Italian is generally spoken. In the rest of Italy it is used as a written tongue, and is spoken in the company of foreigners or of Italians from different provinces. There are dialect newspapers—as a rule comic sheets—and dialect plays. A North Italian and a South Italian will understand each other, because each will try to use as many purely Italian words as he can, but a Northerner will not understand two Sicilians who are talking

by themselves, especially if they are anxious that he should not do so.

The racial element is less important than is generally supposed. There has been at various times a certain admixture of foreign blood among the people of Italy, but unless we go far back it is very slight. Now it is represented mainly by a few Albanian and Greek colonies in the South. In Sicily and Sardinia there are strong Arabic elements, the population of the former island being the most mixed in Italy, and constituted by many superimposed strata. Throughout the mainland, however, the population has been indigenous to the soil for centuries, and composed of various groups of what is practically one race. The numerous foreign invasions have introduced only a trifling infusion of alien blood. History and climate are responsible for the changes of character. The climate has undoubtedly contributed to make the Southern population less steady, less hard-working, but more passionate and vivacious than the Northerners, and the influence of historical events is self-evident.

Still, in spite of regional and local particularism, there are many important factors which make for unity. In the first place, all Italians are firmly convinced of the absolute necessity of it. There may be differences of character and life, and the rich Piedmontese or Lombard manufacturer may affect to despise his poor relations of the South, but the idea of separation never enters into his

head. There are some who regret that such absolute uniformity was adopted in the administration of a country of such various traditions and degrees of civilisation, but the mere suggestion of disruption is indignantly rejected. A few years ago a group of Milanese Radicals and Socialists tried to agitate for the creation of a separate state, with Milan as its capital, but they found no support whatever in the country, and they themselves have quietly dropped the idea. When Italy first became united, the importance of preserving the union was felt to be the nation's first need, and to the whole country a single form of central and local government and a single body of laws were applied; as a rule, the Piedmontese legislative and administrative systems, which were copied from French models, were extended to the rest of Italy. The fear of rendering the union less secure effectively prevented Italian statesmen from adopting different laws and a different degree of political and civil liberty for the various provinces. That fear renders it impossible to establish any distinction even now, however advisable on other grounds it might appear. Thus education (both in the schools and in the universities), the administration of justice, the system of taxation, are all based on one stereotyped system, and little chance is given to the individual genius of each district to develop on its own lines. This is perhaps a misfortune, but it has certainly contributed to attenuate local differ-

ences. Another proof of the general desire for unity among Italians lies in the fact that no political party has ever been formed on the basis of regional particularism. Save for the above-mentioned attempt, there has never been a Piedmontese party, a Neapolitan party, a Sicilian party, and the mutual jealousy between one province and another does not even approach the bitterness which subsists between the English and the Irish Nationalists. This desire to maintain the union as firmly as possible manifests itself in many ways. Whenever a ministerial crisis occurs, the politician entrusted with the formation of the Cabinet must be careful not to arouse local feeling by choosing his colleagues, or a large proportion of them, from any particular region. He must distribute ministerial honours impartially among Lombards, Tuscans, Romans, Piedmontese, and Sicilians, without regard to the ability or suitability of the particular individuals. The same system is followed when a number of new senators are created or when orders of knighthood are conferred. Another manifestation of this desire for uniformity is to be found in the names of the streets and squares. In every Italian town or large village there is a Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, a Corso Garibaldi, a Via Cavour, a Viale Re Umberto. These names have often displaced others of historic and local interest of the highest value. Thus the famous Piazza del Campo at Siena, which had always

\*

been known as such since the days of Dante, is now rechristened Piazza Vittorio Emanuele. Had a letter been posted in any Italian town addressed to the Piazza del Campo without "Siena," it would have reached its destination sooner or later. A letter addressed to the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele might have wandered through all the 8261 communes before it reached the addressee.

Many other factors have contributed to the strengthening of the union. For instance, the conscription, whatever may be the evils of that institution from other points of view, has certainly taught the Italians of each province a great deal about the rest of their country, for it is the policy of the military authorities to mix men from all parts of Italy in the same regiments. The natives of the poorer and less progressive districts are gradually learning that by hard work it is possible to become better off, and those of the more prosperous parts see how much remains to be done for their less fortunate compatriots. Military service is also useful as an educating force, as the conscripts are taught to speak Italian instead of dialect, and to read and write. Railways, the telegraph, trade, and industry have done even more, and it is possible that in a comparatively short time local jealousies will have been to a great extent forgotten. The local differences of character will remain, and in many ways that will be no disadvantage, as such idiosyncrasies develop different forms of activity

and ability, and now that all fear of disruption is past, perhaps the Government will be able to apply to each province the institutions and laws best suited to it. In Sicily, for instance, all the more honest inhabitants would be far more satisfied with a stronger rule and less of that "liberty" which means the despotism of the *Mafiosi* and other criminals. The same remark applies with equal force to Sardinia and to most of the Southern mainland. It has often been necessary in those parts of the country to institute military government, and then only were the *Mafia* and brigandage rendered almost impotent, to the unmitigated satisfaction of all the respectable inhabitants. But whenever it was instituted in other districts it aroused much discontent. In the same way the institution of trial by jury, which in Piedmont, Liguria, and Lombardy is moderately satisfactory, in the South is an unmitigated evil.

There are two ways of regarding this development of local life, which makes of each district, of each town, a world in itself. From the point of view of regional particularism and provincial jealousy it is an evil; but the violence of the feeling is gradually abating. From the point of view of social, intellectual, artistic life it is an advantage. There is no large capital absorbing all the activity and life of the country, and creating a wide gulf between the inhabitants of the metropolis and the provincials, as is the case in France. Moreover, with the natural proclivity

of all Latin peoples towards revolution, a large and all-absorbing capital renders violent changes of government easy and frequent, and makes for continual unrest and insecurity. From this danger Italy is free.





## CHAPTER II

### THE ARISTOCRACY

IT is important to remember that there is a distinction between the English word "aristocracy" and the Italian *aristocrazia*. The latter does not signify the titled classes alone, or those who are of old family. It is best translated "good society." The nobility are, of course, included in it, but so are a certain number of higher Government officials, most of the wealthy business men,—manufacturers, merchants, bankers, etc.,—and a few professional men. The *aristocrazia* is thus composed of various elements. The leaders are local magnates of wealth and title; titled people, in fact, are by far the most numerous, and one may easily find oneself at a large party where all the guests are nobles. The number of people who have a right to bear titles in Italy, owing to the fact that there is no primogeniture, is enormous. It is further increased by those who assume titles without having a right to them.

The highest titles are those of prince and duke, which descend only to the eldest son, but the

younger members of princely and ducal houses have usually other titles ; sometimes they are marquises, counts, and barons, but in certain families they are called *Don* or *Donna*, followed by their Christian name and surname. “ *Dei Principi di X.*” or “ *Dei Duchi di X.*” is sometimes added, if the title is different from the family name. Other titles descend to all the children without distinction, and are applied to them even during their father’s lifetime. Nothing strikes Englishmen who frequent Italian society, more than the immense number of dukes, marquises, and counts that he meets.<sup>1</sup> In some towns of Central Italy and in Venice there are noble families of great antiquity who have no titles. They are called *nobili* or *patrizii*, and are descendants of the *optimates*, or rich burghers of the free cities. The people who do bear titles in these towns have usually acquired them in recent times. In Tuscany they were accorded by the Grand Dukes, and date no further back than the sixteenth or seventeenth century. In Venice the Austrian Government gave permission to all those whose names were inscribed in the Golden Book to call themselves counts, and the majority availed themselves of the privilege. Still, there are to this day many great families who prefer the simple denomination of *patrizio* or *nobile* to more recent shoddy additions, for no one can be created a patrician, while it is easy to

<sup>1</sup> In Sicily alone there are about seventy ducal houses.

be made a count or a baron. Owing to their immense number, not very much importance is attached to titles, and they confer no privileges beyond certain customary rights of precedence. There is a Heraldic Commission which is trying to put a little order into the existing chaos of uncertainty as to who may and who may not bear a title.

There are two separate types of aristocracy in Italy—the feudal or territorial, and the citizen or burgher aristocracy. The former exists in Piedmont, in the Agro Romano, in certain parts of Tuscany, all over the South, in Sicily, and in Sardinia. The nobility of citizen origin is found in the towns of Lombardy, Venetia, and Central Italy. The landed aristocracy of Piedmont, however, has lost its feudal character, and is assimilated with that of the rest of Northern Italy rather than with the Southern nobility. It has still, however, a certain character of its own, and is in some ways not unlike the British nobility. The Piedmontese nobles, on the whole, are intelligent, cultured, and interested in business and commerce. They are good landlords, and they introduce improvements on their estates. At one time their influence on Italian politics was considerable, and all for the good. In the days of the old Sardinian Kingdom, and in the first years of United Italy, they formed a sort of informal Privy Council, who advised the King on all important questions, and on whom he could rely in

moments of difficulty. But when Turin ceased to be the capital, their influence declined, for the King was afraid of surrounding himself with Piedmontese, lest he should be accused of "regional favouritism," the bugbear of Italian politics. Some individual members of the Piedmontese aristocracy still take part in political life, but as a class—the class which gave Italy its Cavaours and its D'Azeglios—it has lost all political significance.

The Lombard nobility is the most progressive section of the Italian upper classes, and the richest. It is of burgher origin, and, after a period of inactivity, it has taken the lead in the new industrial and commercial movement to which the Lombard towns owe their prosperity. Many of the oldest names in the country are now connected with silk factories, engineering works, and banks. They are active and public-spirited, and exercise some political influence. They travel more than most Italians, and are better versed in the affairs of foreign countries. Moreover, there is an admixture of new blood from the wealthy Swiss and German merchants, who settle in Milan, and become connected by marriage with the native families. The Lombard nobles are often men of great wealth, with incomes of £10,000, £20,000, even, in a few cases, of £40,000 or £50,000 a year. They have houses or apartments in Milan and villas on the lakes, in the Brianza, or on the plains, and entertain with splendid hospitality.

The upper classes in Central Italy, again, have their own marked characteristics. Although of citizen origin, and descended from the merchant princes of Florence, Siena, Perugia, and the other city republics, they have entirely abandoned the pursuit of commerce. The one relic of their commercial origin is the little wicket gates or shop doors at the corner of many great palaces in Tuscan towns, bearing the inscription, *Canova di Vino*, or *Cantini*, where the wine and oil from the owners' estates are sold retail. A few Florentine families also keep up hereditary trades.<sup>1</sup> The income of the Tuscan nobles is derived almost entirely from land, and they spend a considerable part of the year on their estates. But their names are always intimately connected with a town. The town house is the family's headquarters, and there the heirlooms and pictures are kept. There is now a certain tendency to concentrate in Florence, but many old and wealthy families are to be found in the smaller centres. Sometimes even villages have their local magnates, whose houses are in the village street. The only professions which a Tuscan of good family enters willingly are the army, the navy, and the diplomatic service, and he does not remain long in any of these careers, but soon retires to look after his estates. These nobles are fairly shrewd and intelligent, but narrow-minded and conservative. They read very little, they seldom travel, and,

<sup>1</sup> The Strozzi's candle factory is a case in point.

especially if they live in one of the smaller towns, they know absolutely nothing of what goes on outside their own district. Sometimes they take part in politics, but their influence is very small, and even in municipal affairs, with a few notable exceptions, they evince slight ability, owing to their prejudices and their fear of treading on other people's toes. There are no very large fortunes in Central Italy, few of the richest families having incomes of more than £10,000 or £12,000 a year; and a great many marquises, counts, and barons have to keep up their position on the narrowest means. Everywhere one finds men of title who live in a chronic state of insolvency, their land mortgaged up to the hilt, and they have but three ways of meeting a financial crisis. One is rigid economy; another is a rich marriage; the third consists of further mortgages and loans. It seldom enters into their heads to go into business or to enter a profession. It is said that a certain Sienese bank of great antiquity and wealth, being a very public-spirited body, is constantly financing some of the old noble families of the town and keeps them going, much in the same way as it contributes to the maintenance of public buildings and churches.

One good quality the Tuscan nobles have—they are excellent landlords. Central Italy is blest with a most satisfactory land system (the *mezzadria*), and the landlord lives on his estate for a great part of the year. He is on good terms

with his peasants, and cases of extortion and oppression are rare. The Tuscan *contadino* has little of that feeling of hostility and diffidence towards his landlord which characterises country life in other parts of Italy, which in the North helps to swell the ranks of Socialism, and in the South finds vent in outbursts of savagery and in brigandage. The Tuscan landlord treats his dependents with kindness and consideration, and without haughtiness. This attitude is the outcome of the old feeling of republican equality, which is maintained to this day by means of the *mezzadria* system. The *contadino* looks upon his landlord almost as a part-proprietor of the land with himself rather than as a superior, and the landlord acquiesces in that view. The Tuscan aristocracy are simple in their ways, and in the country lead an almost patriarchal existence. But they are also somewhat stingy, and even if quite well off they are not very hospitable.

The feudal aristocrat of the South is another distinct type, different from his peers in Northern and Central Italy. On his estates he enjoys customary rights and privileges of a purely feudal nature, which he exercises in spite of the law. The Southern nobles are ignorant, overbearing, incorrigibly lazy, and corrupt. They do no work whatever; they are absentees at Naples, Palermo, or Rome for the greater part, and sometimes for the whole, of the year, and look upon their estates merely as a source of income.

Everything is left in the hands of bailiffs and middlemen, who prove more extortionate than any landlord. They are absolutely callous to the conditions of their peasantry, and care nothing for improvements. Their one object is to make a great show in town with their horses and carriages, their fine clothes, and their mistresses. Enriched for the most part illegally, by appropriating large tracts of the public lands, they are extravagant and reckless in spending their income. Consequently they end by impoverishing themselves and ruining the country. In politics their influence is wholly evil, and they do not hesitate to make use of the *Mafia*, the *Camorra*, and the numerous local *clientèle* to maintain their position. On their country estates their position is very similar to that of the feudal barons of the Middle Ages. Their castles in remote districts of Calabria or Sicily are fortresses, and they ride about the country with escorts of armed and mounted retainers. They are hospitable to strangers, and receive them with a warm, if barbaric, cordiality. Their retainers are devoted to them, but the peasantry regard them with feelings which oscillate between abject servility and sullen hatred. And yet among this degenerate class there are men of high character and genuine zeal for the public cause. One of the most respectable and disinterested Premiers of modern Italy was a Sicilian landlord, the Marchese di Rudini; and other Southern nobles have distinguished themselves in

the Army, in the Diplomatic service, and in politics. But as a class they show few signs of improvement, and differ little from their fathers in the old Bourbon days.

There are, of course, a number of very recent titles in Italy. Any wealthy manufacturer or landowner who desires a handle to his name may get it by giving large sums to charities. When a man has made generous donations to hospitals or other charitable institutions, it is thought proper to give him a fitting reward. Then the would-be nobleman, by means of some friendly Deputy or Senator, lets the powers that be understand that nothing would please him better than a coronet, and the trick is done. In a few rare cases titles are granted as a reward for public services in the Army or in politics, and sometimes a title is attached to a landed estate, and is acquired by the purchaser. An original way of obtaining the coveted distinction is by adoption. There are, as I have said, a great many titled people, especially in the South, who have gone down in the world and who exercise the humblest professions to earn their bread. The aspirant to nobility—a wealthy contractor or a fortunate speculator in stocks—discovers one of these *nobili decaduti* and persuades him, for a consideration, to adopt him as his son. At the death of the chimney-sweeping prince or the cabman earl, the parvenu adopted son inherits the title, and plain Signor Eugenio Donatini blossoms forth into the Principe di Torre

San Gennaro, with coat-of-arms, coronet, family portraits, and liveries all complete. His position, however, is not altogether an enviable one, as he is much laughed at by all who know the story, and everybody does get to know it.

On the whole, it may be said that the Italian upper classes, in spite of their defects, due chiefly to evil traditions and bad education, have many good qualities, and were the younger generation brought up as it should be, they would prove a most useful element in the Italian social system. Unfortunately, however, well-born youths are not well educated. They are either not sent to school at all or sent to priestly colleges. At home they have tutors, usually priests, and they are not taught the responsibilities of their position. In Rome, Florence, Naples, Turin, and Milan, there is a small set whose life is not very different from that of the aristocracy of other countries. They give balls, they hunt and shoot, they travel, they wear clothes made by London tailors, they are interested in horse-racing, and they play cards. But these are not, of course, typically Italian. To know what are the characteristics of the old-fashioned Italian nobility one must see them in the smaller provincial towns. There in a decayed palace, on a cold and bare first floor, one may see the Italian noble with all his idiosyncrasies. Such houses are rarely accessible to foreigners, and the hosts entertain but little. They are usually very poor, but even if well-off

they lead the same simple, comfortless lives. Yet they are not without dignity, and their manners are as perfect as those of the most fashionable society. They have a very exalted idea of their position, but they do not show it outwardly, and treat men of lesser birth with politeness and even cordiality.

The great fault of the Italian upper class is its dislike for work other than looking after landed property. A landlord will devote himself to his estates and spend all his time on their management if they are large enough, but he will not enter a profession. A man with an income of £200 or £300 a year will live on that alone rather than go into business. *Fare il signore*, i. e., to do no work, is the ideal not only of the aristocracy, but of many people of lower rank. If a man possesses a small estate, he regards its management as an ample occupation—*guardare al suo*. I know one family of three brothers having an income of about £200 each. None of them does any work, but they are content with what they have. Only those who must work for their living work at all. A young man whose parents can give him just enough to live upon prefers to *flâner* about the streets of the town all the day and to pass his evenings at the theatre or at social gatherings, rather than increase his income by work. There is, however, a certain improvement, due especially to the example of the Lombards, who have retrieved their family fortunes by business activity,

and a few nobles in other parts of Italy show signs of a similar awakening.

Good society in Italy is not really very exclusive. A rich man, whoever he is, may obtain access to the most select circles. One meets very few professional men in aristocratic drawing-rooms, but this is as much on account of their own abhorrence of anything that savours of frivolity as from the exclusiveness of the nobility. In the smaller towns the chief local magnates are "at home" every evening to the doctor, the lawyer, the priest, and one or two other worthies who drop in for a game of *tresette* (a kind of whist), a cigar, and a glass of lemonade. In some cases even the grocer and the chemist will be received. The host is so conscious of his superior rank that he feels he can entertain whom he likes without loss of dignity.

Among the upper classes there is very little anti-Semitic feeling. Wealthy Jews are treated as equals by the noblest in the land. Among some of the more old-fashioned people, especially among the Clericals, and in Venice, Jews are not received, but as a rule no distinction is made on account of race or religion. Many Jews have been ennobled, and are recognised as members of the *aristocrazia* and leaders of society. Marriages between Jew and Gentile, however, are exceptional.

The insane prejudice against aristocracy *qua* aristocracy has almost disappeared in Italy. It

was not of native growth, but born from French Revolutionary ideas, and the titled classes in Italy are now regarded pretty much as ordinary mortals. In certain sets there is a veneration for noble birth and high-sounding names, but otherwise such things are not worshipped. The aristocracy would be more respected if it led a more useful existence, if its younger members did not waste their time in such an idle and frivolous way; but, on the other hand, there is rather a tendency among all classes in Italy, sometimes even among those who work the hardest, to look upon work as a painful necessity. The labourer who toils in the fields from dawn till dusk may cry out against the rich man who lives at his ease and does nothing, but he feels that had he the means he, too, would lead an idle life. The young man of good family who spends the whole day idling about in the main thoroughfares, ogling the pretty girls, occupying the pavement outside a confectioner's shop, and who thinks of nothing but clothes, gambling, balls, and the theatre, is an object of envy rather than of contempt. In the country districts the influence of the nobility is considerable, but it depends more on their position as landlords than as persons of title. In the small towns they have a certain importance on account of their historic descent. In the larger towns aristocracy is of small account, unless accompanied by wealth.



## CHAPTER III

### THE MIDDLE CLASSES

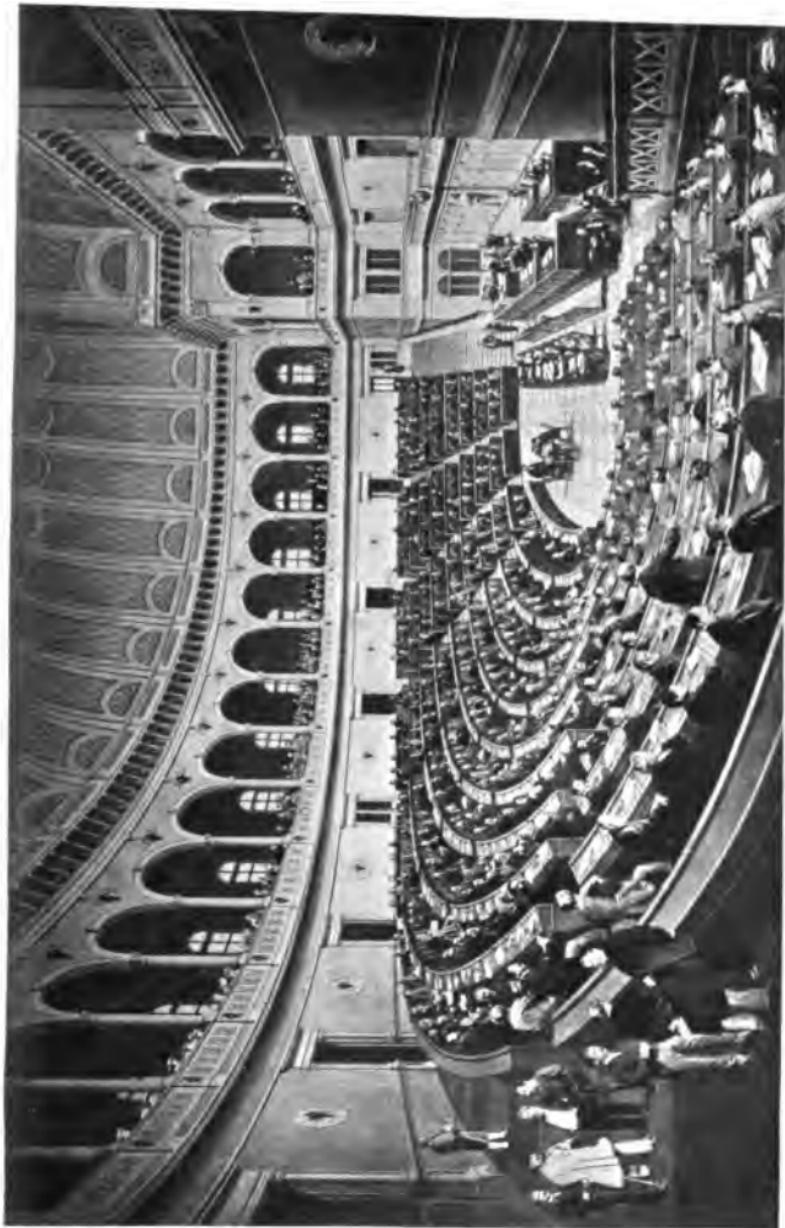
THE Italian middle classes have but little connection with the aristocracy. Unlike the English middle class, which is constantly recruited by the addition of the younger sons of the nobility, it always remains distinct from the "upper ten." A certain number of persons with no claim to noble birth are received in aristocratic circles, but the two classes, as classes, do not mingle. On the other hand, the middle class merges imperceptibly into the lower middle class, and thence into the masses. In England the term "gentleman" applies indiscriminately to the nobleman, the man of "county family," the professional man, and the merchant. But in Italy the corresponding term *signore* is applied only to the nobility, and to such members of the *bourgeoisie* as are received in aristocratic society. The professions, with the exception of the army, the navy, and the diplomatic service, are entirely recruited from the middle classes. They almost monopolise the bar, the bench, the medical profession, trade, and industry, the civil service, and

educational appointments. Even in the army and the navy the nobility only form a strong minority, and many posts in the diplomatic service are held by men of no birth. In the public schools and universities the men of good family are very few, and even if they do go through their academic career with success they rarely practise the profession to which it would entitle them. Hence it is the middle class which practically governs the country. This *bourgeois* monopoly cannot be regarded as an advantage, but it is an unmistakable fact.

The Italian middle class is narrow-minded, more so even than the provincial aristocracy. The average barrister, medical man, university professor, or civil servant, however able he may be as a specialist in his own particular line, has very little knowledge of general affairs. He knows few people outside his own circle, he reads little, and he knows next to nothing of foreign countries and of foreign thought. This narrow-mindedness is one of the chief causes of the generally unsatisfactory state of Italian politics. The lawyer whose ideas do not extend beyond the five codes, the professor whose sole interest in life lies in deciphering Greek MSS., the merchant whose mind is all in his ledgers, cannot be expected to grasp the intricacies of national finance, or understand the workings of the parliamentary system. The root of the evil lies partly in the poverty of most professional men, which prevents them from

travelling and from buying books, partly in the imperfections of the Italian educational system, and partly in the provincial particularism which limits a man's interest to a small district. These drawbacks, however, are losing their old force, and the Italian middle classes are now better educated, wealthier, and less filled with the *spirito di campanile* than they were twenty or thirty years ago, particularly in Northern Italy, and among men of business.

The most important profession in Italy, both as regards numbers and influence, is the bar. In the universities there are more students in the faculty of law than in any other. There are about two hundred barristers in the Chamber of Deputies, out of a total of five hundred and eight members. A considerable number of Government appointments are only open to barristers, or at least to graduates in law. There is no distinction between barristers and solicitors: the *avvocato* does the work of both. A man has his legal adviser, who attends to his business for him, and if he should have a lawsuit pleads for him in court as well. A notary, who at first sight might appear to be a kind of solicitor, is really different, as his work consists almost exclusively in drawing up wills, bills of sale, marriage settlements, and other contracts. He rarely advises his client on business matters, and has nothing to do with his lawsuits or the choice of his counsel. One of the attractions of the legal profession is that it is easier



THE HOUSE OF DEPUTIES.



to enter than most others. The aspirant to legal honours, when he leaves school, puts his name down as a law student at one of the twenty-one universities with which Italy is endowed. He attends lectures on law for four years, at the end of each of which he goes up for a certain number of examinations. These are by no means difficult, and may be passed by studying six hours a day for a month or two previously. When the final examination has been successfully undergone, the student becomes a Doctor of Law. A few months later he has an examination in civil procedure, after which he becomes a *procuratore*, i. e., a barrister who can plead in all courts save the Courts of Cassation; as a matter of fact, he does not usually take to pleading at once, but works in the chambers of a barrister of several years' standing for two years more. Then, after a last examination of a purely technical character, he becomes a full-fledged *avvocato*.

The average professional income of a moderately successful barrister ranges from £250 to £300 a year. A very small number earn from £500 to £800, and there are half a dozen who earn £4000 a year, but these are all men with powerful political connections. A barrister who is a Deputy can demand larger fees than one who is not, and a Cabinet Minister, even an ex-Cabinet Minister, or a politician who is likely to be in the Cabinet in the near future, commands still higher fees, for his opinion carries greater weight with the judges.

But there is a very large number of lawyers who make the most miserable incomes—£40 to £60 a year, and even less. Some are reduced to giving legal advice for a few lire. The purely professional barristers, who do not touch politics, are as a rule honest, hard-working, and respectable men, leading quiet, uneventful lives, and are loyal to their clients. But there is another class to whom law is only a matter of secondary importance, and who deal in financial and political transactions of a shady character. They are employed as electioneering agents and instruments of jobbery. They use their knowledge of the law in order to evade it and to help others to do so. Their knowledge of legal quibbles is unlimited, and, unfortunately, the courts are not so severe on chicanery as they should be. They have cast an unjust slur on the whole profession of which they are supposed to be representatives. The total number of barristers in 1898 was no less than twenty-three thousand.

Italian law is less complicated than that of England. The mass of civil, criminal, and commercial law, and of procedure, is embodied in five codes. Other matters are codified in special bodies of law and statutes. The basis of the system is Roman law modified by French and Italian legislators, although to some subjects, of course, Roman law is inapplicable. Consequently Italian barristers can find most of their law at a moment's notice, and there is less need for them to special-

ise; the only recognised division is that between civil and criminal lawyers. A good deal has in certain cases to be read up beforehand, such as those connected with tenant rights or in which acts of the authorities are concerned; but as a general rule every lawyer can easily take up the whole of either civil and commercial law or criminal law as his province. The courts not being centralised in a few centres as they are in England, but spread over the whole country, every town, large or small, has its own bar, to which a number of *avvocati* are permanently attached. The ablest pleaders, however, are in request everywhere, and when there is an important case being tried, they are sent for from one end of Italy to the other. Some of these famous counsels are men of great eloquence and learning, but they tend rather to rant and theatrical rhetoric, the form of oratory which makes most impression on judges, jury, and public, especially in criminal cases.

The profession whose members stand highest for respectability and skill is that of medicine. Medical tuition in Italian universities is inadequate and unsatisfactory; the number of medical degrees is enormous (over a thousand per annum), and out of all proportion to the needs of the population; the remuneration for medical and surgical attendance very small; yet, in spite of all these disadvantages, Italian medical men are among the best in Europe. To become a doctor it is

necessary to go through a six years' course of lectures and of practical work in the hospitals at a university. The examinations are not very difficult, but rather harder than those in the law faculty. At the end of this period the student receives his medical degree. Then two courses are open to him: he can either set up to practise at once on his own account, or he can try to obtain employment as *medico condotto*, or municipal doctor. A great many graduates, with that love of appointments which characterises all Latin peoples, choose this second course. The life of a doctor in a country commune is a very hard one, and the salary miserable. But among this class are to be found men who have real ability, and their devotion to duty in the majority of cases is unflinching. In a small mountain village of Northern Italy in which I once spent some time, the local doctor was a spruce, neat little man, brimful of good nature and wit, always ready at duty's call, always cheerful and cheering, with never a word of complaint at his hard lot. He had sometimes to ride or drive for miles on icy cold winter nights, with the snow lying deep on the ground, to attend to the ailments of some old peasant woman. He was an excellent general practitioner; he added dentistry to his other accomplishments, and could extract a tooth in a way that would do honour to a graduate of the Philadelphia Dental College. And all this on £60 or £80 a year, plus a few trifling fees! In

the larger towns a good doctor may earn about £300 or £350 a year, while some of the best-known specialists make £1000 a year, and a few celebrities three or four times that amount. On the other hand, there are many doctors who make nothing at all, and swell the host of the educated unemployed. They are hardly ever extortionate in their fees, and even the greatest celebrities attend to a large number of cases gratis. The usual fee for a visit is from four to eight shillings, or if one goes to the doctor's consulting rooms, from two to four shillings (generally one pays more for a first visit). The fees for specialists are, of course, somewhat higher.

Most of what an Italian doctor knows he has learned by himself after his university course; for, if he can afford it, the medical graduate usually spends some years in further study, either as assistant to some celebrity in a hospital or at a foreign medical school. Members of the profession are somewhat unbusiness-like, and it is often difficult to get them to send in their bills, the delay often extending over a very long time. The majority care extremely little about making money, and are entirely absorbed in the interest of their "cases." They are rather unpunctual, too, and you cannot always depend on their coming at a specified time, even when they are not delayed by other patients. They have none of that professional etiquette which is the very life-blood of English physicians. They never wear a

tall hat, and are not obliged to have expensive residences and consulting rooms. Their manner with their patients is simple and unassuming; there is none of the "how are we?" business, or the solemn look and head-shaking. On the other hand, they are rather too fond of talking about matters of "general interest" when paying a professional visit. When you are laid up with influenza or a sore throat and are feeling thoroughly miserable, you do not want to discuss the progress of socialism, the ministerial crisis, or Mascagni's new opera with your doctor. But this is, of course, only a small weakness compared with their sterling qualities.

The branches of medical science in which Italians excel are bacteriology and surgery. Some of the most important discoveries of modern times in these subjects are due to Italian doctors. This is particularly noteworthy, as the laboratories and the hospitals, with a very few exceptions, are quite inadequate. Some doctors and professors of medicine, who are men of private means, have fitted up excellent laboratories in the universities and hospitals at their own expense.

A new type of late years has risen into prominence in Italian society—the man of business. The old Italian commercial spirit has revived once more, and trade and industry, after a long period of depression and inactivity, have wakened to new life. The typical *uomo d'affari* is generally a Piedmontese or a Lombard. He is a shrewd, in-

telligent person, educated perhaps in a Swiss or German commercial college, speaking several languages, and ready on the spot wherever he sees a market for his wares or an opening for his skill. He is now to be met with in all parts of Italy, and manages to make money even in conservative Tuscany and in the poverty-stricken South. He earns a far larger income than the majority of professional men, so that the middle classes, and to a certain extent the aristocracy, are at last beginning to see the advantages of putting their sons into business instead of making indifferent lawyers, doctors, or university professors of them. Italian business men are very practical, and utilitarian to a fault. They, too, are not free from the defect, common to most professional men in Italy, of over-specialisation. Their ideas are limited to their own occupation, and they have thought for few other things. Still, the very nature of their work tends to enlarge their minds, and they are already influencing society in no small degree. Among them are to be reckoned the engineers who are employed in all industrial undertakings. They are less numerous and they make larger incomes than doctors or lawyers. They enjoy a deservedly high reputation, even abroad, especially the electricians. The term "engineer" in Italy has a wide meaning, and is applied to architects and agricultural specialists as well as to makers of roads and machinery.

There is, as I have said, little distinction between the professional or upper middle class and the lower; this in its turn lapses imperceptibly into the lowest strata of society—the peasant and the artisan. The barrister and the professor do not, as a rule, regard themselves socially as very much superior to the shopkeeper, but there is almost a fetish worship of the "liberal professions," and it is the ambition of the small tradesman, of the well-to-do farmer, of the skilled artisan, to make his son enter one of them.

Economically the middle class are more or less at one with the aristocracy. The upper middle class is intensely conservative, and opposed to socialism. The aristocracy is also in the main conservative, but contains many liberal elements. The Socialist party is recruited chiefly from the lower middle class, although its leaders are usually professional men. In the South aristocracy and *bourgeoisie* form one single social caste, separated by a wide gulf from the lower orders, but political divisions take a different line. In the present state of parliamentary politics it is impossible to say that one class belongs to one party and one to another.





## CHAPTER IV

### QUESTIONS OF WEALTH AND POVERTY<sup>1</sup>

EVER since Italy became a nation she has been beset with financial difficulties. Finance has always been one of the most serious problems with which the new kingdom has had to deal. In the first place, everything had to be done. Railways and roads had to be built, a government set up, schools opened, industry and agriculture developed. Even after the War of 1866, which taxed the country's resources to the utmost, a large army had to be maintained and a new navy created. In building up a financial system many mistakes were made, vast sums were wasted on useless objects, and a considerable amount disappeared in all sorts of ways. However, after many sacrifices, in 1875 the *pareggio* (the balance between revenue and expenditure) was obtained, but after 1881 another period of reckless extravagance followed, which brought Italy to the verge

<sup>1</sup> The figures in this chapter relating to Italian finance and to the wages of the lower classes are taken chiefly from the *Annuario Statistico* for 1900, and from Messrs. King and Okey's *Italy To-day*.

of bankruptcy. Now things are improving once more. Accounts are kept with greater accuracy, extravagance is curtailed, and a deficit of £9,000,000 (in 1889) has been converted into a surplus. If the improved situation does not produce a fresh outburst of profusion, Italian finance should soon be placed on a really solid basis.

The two chief items of expenditure are the interest on the National debt and the Army and Navy budget. In 1871 the debt amounted to £323,000,000; in 1899 it was £516,000,000, of which the interest was £27,500,000.<sup>1</sup> But for the debt, taxation could be reduced enormously. As things stand, little can be spent on schools or on the civil service, because of the heavy charges necessitated by the debt. It is very difficult to see how it can be diminished as yet. Repudiation is, of course, not even dreamed of, and a reduction of the interest would only be possible after a long period of a low rate of exchange and of high funds.

The second most important item is, as I have said, the Army and Navy budget. Every one is agreed in theory that it should be cut down, but when definite proposals are put forward there are considerable differences of opinion. It is recognised that the Navy budget of £4,300,000 cannot be reduced. Italy's coast-line is far too vulnerable to admit of it; on the contrary, there is a movement in favour of spending more money on the

<sup>1</sup> Reduced by the tax of 20 per cent on the 5 per cent bonds.

fleet, as it is not at present in a state of great efficiency. The Army budget amounts to about £10,000,000. Italy's geographical position renders a comparatively large army necessary, and not the Triple Alliance. She is exposed to attack, both from France and Austria, and whatever alliances she may make, her frontiers must be defended. However, something might be done by introducing a more economical system into Army matters, and the present twelve Army corps might, according to many good authorities, be reduced to ten without diminishing, but rather increasing, the strength of the whole force. In any case, military expenditure has been reduced from £19,000,000 to its present level in a few years.

But besides the necessities of national defence and the laudable desire to make of Italy a modern state, what has contributed to making Italian finance so deplorable is extravagance. Miles of unnecessary railway have been built, hideous but expensive public buildings erected, many useless posts created, partly to satisfy the Italian's innate love of show and partly as the outcome of actual jobbery. In the construction of railways extravagance has had freest scope. It is admitted that of the £120,000,000 spent on them more than half has proved absolutely unproductive. The contracts between the two great railway companies and the State are so devised as to give the latter a minimum of control at a maximum of expense. Many of the railways which

have been built are known as "electoral railways," because they owe their existence to political manœuvres by which a candidate for Parliament or a Ministry gained the votes of some constituency by promising a line that would be convenient to its inhabitants. Others were constructed to please local magnates, and others merely to afford speculators and contractors the means of turning a more or less honest penny. Often the suicidal policy was adopted of spending money on unnecessary public works simply to give work to the unemployed or the discontented. But it seems that the Italians are learning the lesson, and within the last few years this wasteful expenditure has been much reduced.

The chief sources of the State's income are taxation, the State lottery, and various monopolies. In taxation Italy enjoys an unenviable primacy.<sup>1</sup> Everything is taxed, and what is worse, food and first necessities are most heavily charged. The tax on landed property is particularly oppressive, and the small proprietor or farmer suffers most. The land tax ranges from twenty to twenty-five per cent, and in addition there is the income tax, which has to be paid even when there is no profit, and a heavy succession duty. The taxes are so assessed that the small land-owner often fears to improve his estate lest the tax should be raised exorbitantly. Altogether

<sup>1</sup>The State takes a larger proportion of the income of the people than any other country (about 30 per cent).

the taxes on landed property amount to thirty, forty, or even fifty per cent. The income tax varies from seven and one-half to twenty per cent. Small incomes (up to £21 6s. 8d.) are exempt; professional incomes and salaries, and Government and municipal stipends are totally exempt up to a higher figure, and partially exempt up to £40 or £50. Many industries are favoured with partial exemption, especially new ones. One of the most iniquitous forms of taxation, from its method of assessment, is the so-called family tax, which is imposed by the communes, and varies according to the different localities. A municipal official comes to your house and asks to see the head of the family. He subjects you to a cross-examination regarding the members of your household; he asks if you keep a carriage; he goes round the house or apartment, counts the rooms, examines the furniture, the carpets, etc., and then checks the information you have given him by cross-questioning the servants and the neighbours. On this basis he makes a rough calculation as to the probable amount of your income, and assesses you accordingly. The assessments, as may be easily imagined, invariably fall wide of the mark, often to a grotesque degree. Some people escape this tax altogether, because their existence is not discovered, while others are taxed enormously, simply because the official — always a poor and ignorant man — is impressed by some luxury

which seems to him to betoken vast wealth. Besides these there are the special (municipal) taxes on horses, carriages, servants, dogs, etc. As another instance of unfair assessments, in many communes of Southern Italy the landlord's saddle-horse is exempt, while the peasant's donkey is taxed as a sort of income. All these taxes, and others, too, are liable to evasion.

Another source of State income is the Government monopolies of salt and tobacco. Sea-salt is protected by armed guards, who patrol the whole length of the coast to prevent people from "stealing" sea-water in buckets to obtain the salt. Italy is under a strictly protectionist *régime*, and there are heavy duties on food-stuffs. A large amount is annually imported from America, but it pays a duty of 13s. 6d. per quarter to the State. There is a free-trade movement in Italy, but it is not very powerful, as the majority of Italians, being more or less interested in agriculture, fear that the free admission of foreign grain would spell ruin to them. Even the Socialists, although free-traders in theory, do not press the point. The more advanced free-traders maintain that foreign competition would only stimulate the Italian agricultural classes to improve the soil and adopt machinery, and that it would in the end prove a blessing even to those who at first would suffer most. Still, it is doubtful if the country is yet ready for so far-reaching a measure. Something in that direction is done by reducing

or even abolishing the corn duties in bad years. A more unquestioned evil is the milling monopoly, which still further raises the price of bread without benefiting anybody. Also the municipal *octroi* duties on food and drink fall heavily on the poor of the larger towns.

What contributes to make taxation in Italy so oppressive and so odious is the vexatious manner in which the taxes are levied. The Italian taxpayer is ceaselessly harried and interfered with by tax-collectors, customs officials, *octroi* agents, and all the vast host of ignorant, underpaid, and not always too honest, bureaucrats. Everything is done so as to cause him as much inconvenience as possible. Frequently the same object is taxed twice over, and the numberless supplementary taxes make him think that there is almost a tax on being taxed. For instance, for all petitions, all requests for admission to a school, a university, or an examination, all claims for damages—in a word, all addresses to public bodies—a fee has to be paid. But besides that fee, one has to pay for stamped paper on which statements of this sort are made. The value marked on this paper is usually 5d. ; but one must pay 6d. for it. Again, besides the price indicated on a railway ticket, an extra charge must be paid, which is not marked, but merely calculated by the official, not always accurately. These and countless similar *angherie fiscali* contribute more than anything else to render the Government unpopular, for they put every one in

a bad temper. The system is also extremely expensive. The army of financial officials may be underpaid, but they cost a great deal all the same, and are idle half the day. It was calculated, for instance, that in a certain commune of Sicily the *octroi* duty which brought in £880 a year cost £720 to levy!

Taxation, as I have remarked, falls more heavily on the poor than on the rich. The artisan or labourer who drinks no wine pays from ten to twenty per cent of his scanty wages in taxation. Still, even the rich, especially the landowners, are cruelly taxed. It is not true, as has been said, that Italy is the best country for the rich and the worst for the poor; it is the best country for the vast class of middlemen and speculators, contractors, more or less veiled *Camorristi* and *Mafiosi*, and intriguing *avvocati politici* (lawyer-politicians), for whom, as Professor Nitti says, the whole ponderous machinery of government seems to have been created. A reform of taxation is regarded by all the most competent financiers as an urgent necessity. It is proposed to introduce the principle of graduation into the succession duties and to extend it in the income tax. Certain of the more odious and vexatious taxes are to be abolished, and the whole system is to be placed on a different and more equitable footing. But such reforms are very difficult to carry out, as most Italians pin their faith on what they call taxes on a broad basis, i. e., paid by a very large

number of people. This usually means that the poor are the greatest sufferers in the end. However, unless the rising tide of prosperity should cease, a lightening of the burdens may soon become a reality.

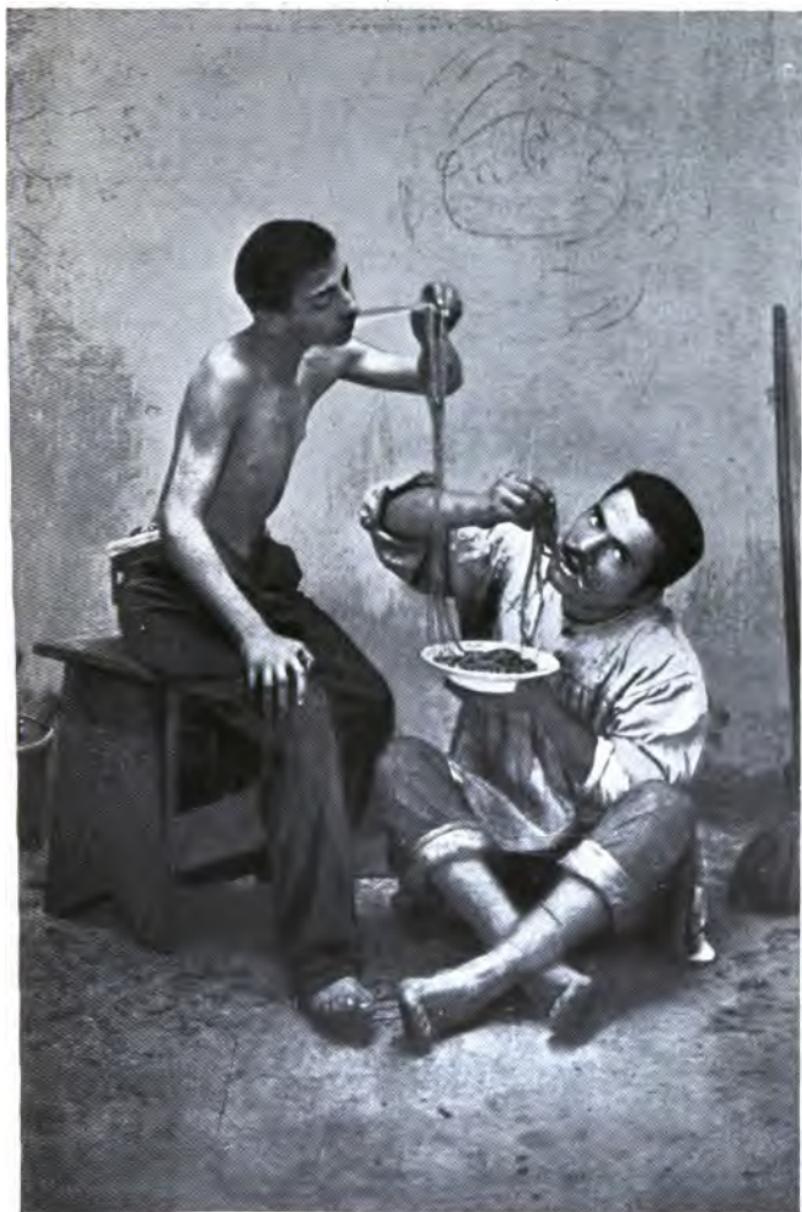
The private incomes and earnings of all classes in Italy are far inferior to those of England, France, Germany, and other countries. The total wealth of Italy in 1891 was calculated by Signor Bodio at £2,160,000,000, or £7 16s. 8d. a year per head of population.<sup>1</sup> Professional men, even when fairly successful, rarely earn good incomes, and the salaries of Government officials are all on a very low scale. We have seen what the average professional earnings are among barristers, doctors, and engineers. There are about twenty or twenty-five literary men who make comfortable incomes, although these are often owed in great part to royalties from foreign publishers; a host of others make no more than £20 or £30 a year, and consequently there are very few who depend on literature alone as a profession. Government officials begin their career on salaries ranging from £48 to £72 a year, but they are frequently unpaid for the first year or two. Permanent under-secretaries to the different Ministries receive from £300 to £400 a year. There are only 110 officials who are paid more than £400 a year, including Ambassadors, who receive from £1000

<sup>1</sup>The average income of an Englishman is £31; of a Frenchman, £26; of a Prussian, £17; of an Austrian, £8.

to £4000, and no one may receive a pension of more than £320 a year.

The wages of artisans and labourers are on a correspondingly low scale. Skilled labour is paid at a rate varying from 1s. to 6s. 5d. a day, and unskilled labour from 11d. to 4s. Hired agricultural labourers receive from 8d. to 1s. 2d., but in the South the wages are often not more than 4d. or 5d. There are, however, certain additions; sometimes lodgings are provided free, there is extra piece-work, and the women of the family usually work as well as the men. The Tuscan *contadini* on the *mezzadria* system are, of course, much better off. Working hours are about ten a day for industries, and rather more for rural labour. During harvest-time the hours are much longer, and in Apulia when the olives are pressed the labourers often work nineteen or twenty consecutive hours. In many trades there are no more than two or three hundred working days in the year; for instance, in the building trade and in the Carrara quarries. Social reformers press for a reduction of the hours of labour and a minimum wage.

The food of the Italian lower classes consists mainly of wheaten bread or maize. The latter is eaten as *polenta*, and is often preferred to bread or even meat, as it causes a feeling of satiety which other and better viands cannot produce. The Marchese Guerrieri-Gonzaga, a landlord of Mantova, began to distribute meat among his peas-



**EATING MACARONI—NAPLES.**



antry, but he soon discovered that they sold it to buy *polenta* instead. The great consumption of *polenta*, often made of badly dried maize, produces a terrible skin disease known as the *pellagra*, which is very prevalent in Lombardy and Venetia, although happily now on the decrease. A great deal of nutritious vegetable food is eaten by the poor, especially pulse, celery, radishes, and fruit, but very little meat, which many never taste save on rare feast days. Salt fish, bacon, frogs, and snails are more usual; the two latter are regarded almost as delicacies even by the middle classes. A fairly well-to-do peasant eats three meals a day. For breakfast (usually taken after two or three hours' work) he has bread and cheese and vegetables; for dinner a large dish of *polenta*, with a sauce of oil, garlic, and anchovies, or a *minestra*, which is a thick soup, with beans, cabbage, and other vegetables, or maccaroni. The whole is washed down with wine. In the evening there is a supper similar to the dinner, but less substantial. On Sunday better and more varied fare is eaten, and stronger wine drunk. But the majority of day labourers and small farmers in Lombardy, Venetia, and the South have far less to eat—sometimes nothing but *polenta* or maccaroni. The consumption of sugar, biscuits, and coffee is very small, and jam is unknown; good butter is common in the North, but very little is consumed elsewhere. In spite of improved conditions, there are still many thousands of peasants and artisans

who suffer from a permanent insufficiency of food, although, of course, the climate necessitates a smaller amount than is required in more northern countries. The dwellers in the towns are rather better off, as wages are higher, and more is done for them in the way of cheap kitchens, charities, etc.

The general standard of comfort is decidedly low even in the more prosperous parts of the country. In many places several families occupy a single room, and the clothes of the lower classes are often in a wretched state; it is a common sight to see men and women, and especially children, absolutely in rags. Italians, however, are frugal, their lives simple, and their wants, though growing, few, so that many things that are indispensable even to the poorest people of other lands, to them are matters of indifference. A cheerful disposition enables them to bear up against many troubles.

There are in Italy very great inequalities of wealth, and although large fortunes are less numerous and less vast than in England or America, one realises the differences more owing to the love of ostentation which is so conspicuous. The rich, too, live so close to the poor that the latter can never forget their poverty. A house of which the first floor, or *piano nobile*, is occupied by a family worth £5000 or £6000 a year, also contains miserable garrets and damp cellars where the poorest of the poor lodge. The latter see

splendid equipages drive up to their own doors, as it were, every day, and costly viands brought upstairs for great banquets; at night they see ladies glittering with jewels entering the house, and hear the strains of dance music, while they themselves are starving above or below. It is Mayfair and Whitechapel in the same building. Nowhere is there a rich quarter inhabited by the rich alone, nor a poor quarter containing no good houses. The slums invade all parts of the town, and sometimes are found near the gates of the Royal Palace itself. In the country it is the same: the nobleman's villa is surrounded by the houses of his *contadini*. In Tuscany, where the labourers and farmers are better off, the contrast is not so striking or painful, but in the South one often comes across a fine castle, furnished with comfort and even luxury, the sideboard bright with silver-plate, the walls covered with silk and tapestry and good pictures, placed in the midst of a filthy village of the most miserable hovels, in which men, women, and children live and starve together with pigs and cattle. All this contributes to embitter the feelings of the poor towards their masters, which often degenerate into unforgiving hatred, and the landlords have only their armed retainers, who are little less than bravos, to depend on for their personal safety.

Until recently agriculture was practically the sole source of wealth in Italy, and it is still the most important; this fact was one of the chief

causes of the country's poverty, as no land can be rich which depends on agriculture alone. Moreover, the soil of Italy is not exceptionally fertile. Sixteen per cent of it is mountainous or otherwise incapable of cultivation, and a large part of the remainder can be cultivated only with great difficulty. But toil and infinite patience have done much to make even the stony wastes productive. Wheat is the principal crop, and amounts annually to about one hundred and thirty-two million bushels; but it is insufficient for the needs of the population, and a great deal, as I have said, comes from abroad. The yield of wheat per acre is on an average eleven or twelve bushels, which is inferior to that of French or English land. This low yield is due to primitive methods and to the exhaustion of the soil through bad farming. But it has been proved by experiments in Emilia, in the province of Bergamo, and in the Friuli that the land may be made to bear a much higher yield. In some districts it has reached twenty-five, thirty, even fifty bushels per acre, and the cost of production has been greatly reduced. Improved methods and machinery are being gradually introduced, but much passive resistance and many conservative prejudices will have to be overcome before the rural classes can be induced to take kindly to them, especially in Central and Southern Italy. The cereal which comes next to wheat in importance is Indian corn. The annual yield is eighty-two million five hundred thousand

bushels. Italy comes immediately after France as a wine-producing country, and before Austria and Spain; she produces over seven hundred million gallons every year. In quality Italian wines are good table wines, but they do not travel well, as they are unskilfully manufactured, and the Italian wine-grower, from an exaggerated jealousy lest his wine should not be considered absolutely pure, has hitherto refused to resort to such scientific aids as would improve its quality and durability. Within recent years, however, some progress is noticeable, and wine and grapes to the value of nearly £3,000,000 are exported. A large part of it goes to the south of France, where it is "doctored" and made into Bordeaux. The wine industry has suffered from the ravages of the phylloxera and the peronospora, but a remedy has now been found for these diseases in a solution of sulphate of copper which, sprinkled over the vine-leaves, has proved very effective.

Oil is another valuable agricultural asset, the annual yield of which amounts to about forty-five million gallons, while £2,000,000 worth is exported. Lately a parasite called the *mosca olearia* has greatly damaged the crop, and almost destroyed it in Apulia, and as yet no remedy has been discovered. In the South much fruit, especially oranges and lemons, is grown, although this trade has suffered from the competition of the United States and of semi-tropical countries. A new and promising branch of rural activity has

been developed in Northern Italy—dairy farming. In Lombardy and Venetia a number of co-operative dairies have sprung up, and are worked with great success. Butter, eggs, and poultry are exported in large quantities, and compete with the best French or English article. Pasture-lands are a source of income in various districts, and cattle, horses, donkeys, and sheep are reared in Northern and Central Italy. The Roman Campagna, Sardinia, and the Maremma form excellent grazing grounds for cattle and horses.

On the whole, agriculture is making slow but steady progress in every direction. Farming is more intelligent, the use of chemical manure becoming more general, and the rotation of crops better understood. Agricultural exports increase, and in every Continental country, one sees Italian railway vans labelled *Derrate Alimentari*. They contain Italian agricultural produce exported to feed the markets of Europe. The obstacles which have to be combated are no doubt serious, but the remedies are being found. Against foreign protective tariffs something may be done by means of commercial treaties. Malaria is a more terrible evil. No less than eighty per cent of the inhabitants of Southern Italy, and a large proportion of those of other parts, are exposed to its ravages. About twenty thousand people a year die of this disease, and it renders cultivation almost impossible in the Pontine marshes, in many districts of the Basilicata, on the west coast of Calabria, in

the Maremma, and in a large part of Sardinia. But since 1860, one million seven hundred thousand acres have been reclaimed, and even in the Maremma wide tracts of land have been made productive, notably the large Government property near Grosseto, which is a model establishment of its kind. The eucalyptus plantations in the Roman Campagna have had only a qualified success, and are believed by some authorities to foster rather than to destroy the malarial germs. It has now been discovered that the dread disease is communicated by a species of the *Anopheles* mosquito, which can be extirpated by the destruction of its larvæ, while men can be protected by means of wire-netting in the windows, as it only flies by night. It is confidently hoped that in this way another million acres can be reclaimed, and that the ghastly fever-stricken faces of the peasantry, which are so common in all the malarial districts of Italy, will soon be a memory of the past. Hail is another curse to the Italian farmer, especially in the North. A hail-storm lasting half an hour may destroy the fruits of months of labour, and its ravages are so extensive that hitherto insurance companies have refused to insure against it. But it is believed that a preventive has at last been found. Cannons shaped like sugar-loaves, loaded with a special kind of pyrite powder, are discharged when storms are threatening, and the hail descends in consequence in the form of fine snow or sleet. Syndicates

subsidised by the Government have been formed in the districts most affected, to purchase the necessary implements. In stormy summer weather a stranger in Northern Italy would think himself on a battle-field from the noise of artillery which he hears all around him.

Another enemy which the much-tried Italian agriculturist has to combat is drought. Many rich provinces of Italy, especially in Apulia, cannot be cultivated owing to the want of irrigation. The infamous destruction of trees initiated in the eighteenth century, and continued to a certain extent even to this day, has in various parts of the country totally changed the climate, and is responsible for the disastrous drought. The neighbourhood of Florence, for instance, was once rich in trees, and the now bare Monte Morello a hundred and fifty years ago was covered with forest. The Italians are not a tree-loving people, and their natural instinct leads them to cut trees down wherever they see them, under the impression that every acre cleared of trees is an acre gained to agriculture, while at the same time a profit may be made by selling the timber. But although the latter temporary advantage may be a real one, the former is totally fallacious, for by destroying the forests the rainfall is seriously impaired; instead of the cultivated area being increased, it bears a poorer yield in consequence of the drought. There are forest laws which forbid the cutting down of trees in certain districts, but

they are inadequate, and not always carried out; even at Vallombrosa the forests are no longer what they were. The Government is alive to the importance of protecting the forests and of extending them, but constant vigilance is necessary. It is feared, for instance, that in constructing the aqueduct for Apulia, to irrigate that parched region, the forests will be cut down and that the river Sele, which is to feed it, will run dry in consequence. Signor Baccelli, several times Minister of Education, instituted the annual "arbour day," on which the pupils of the elementary schools in rural districts are taken for a picnic and made to plant trees in suitable spots. It is thus hoped not only to increase the forests, but to inoculate the rising generation with a love for them.

The most promising field of national progress, however, lies in the development of trade and industry. It had been constantly and confidently asserted by Italian and foreign writers that Italy could never be anything but an agricultural country, and that neither the character of her people nor her natural resources fitted her for an industrial future. But the sudden and rapid development of the last few years bid fair to falsify these predictions. All over Northern Italy factories have sprung up, bringing wealth and prosperity in their train. The movement is slowly extending to Central Italy, and even Bari in the South promises to become an industrial centre. Until 1880 hardly anything was manufactured

save for home consumption, and the articles produced were of a very inferior kind—coarse linen and canvas, common cloths, cheap domestic utensils, and some artistic wares. The only manufactured article which was exported in any considerable quantity was silk, but even this was sent to France in an unfinished state. The total foreign trade of Italy in 1862 was barely £60,000,000. It had increased to about £90,000,000 in 1870, but the exports were almost exclusively agricultural. Subsequently exports declined owing to the French protective tariffs. But within the last decade they have suddenly begun to rise by leaps and bounds—from £39,000,000 in 1890 to over £53,000,000 in 1899, while the imports rose from £48,000,000 to over £65,000,000 in the same period. The old silk industry has nearly doubled in fifteen years, and the weaving, formerly done abroad, is now done in Italy. A variety of new industries have been started and promise well. The cotton industry has risen in value from £2,000,000 in 1876 to £12,000,000 in 1899. Woollen materials and the finer kinds of cloth are manufactured with success. Two most important branches of industry are steel goods and electrical machinery. A few years ago the very suggestion that Italy should produce these articles would have been laughed to scorn; to-day it is an accomplished fact. Guns and armour for the fleet are made entirely at home, at the steel mills of Terni and Savona, and at the Armstrong works

at Pozzuoli. There are locomotive works at Sampierdarena, and rolling stock is built at Milan. Goods of these different kinds are exported in increasing quantities.<sup>1</sup>

Electricity has a great future in Italy. It received its first impulse from the Italian's love of electric light and tramways; its use began as a mere luxury, and the plant, the machinery, the materials, and even the operatives were imported from abroad. Now electricity is being introduced into all manner of industries, and almost everything is of Italian make. Wandering about the remoter parts of the country one frequently comes upon villages supplied with electric light, of which the dynamos work small local industries by day. A case in point is the village of Castel del Piano (province of Grosseto), where an enterprising landed proprietor has set up an electrical plant, which by day works his flour mills, and lights the streets and houses by night. Signor Tosi's electrical works at Legnano, the Pirelli works at Milan, are first-class establishments, and export largely. A small town like Stia (province of Arezzo) has started factories for electrical machinery. Biella, Como, Novara, Voghera, Alessandria, Bergamo, Brescia, and other towns of Piedmont and Lombardy have become prosperous through these and other manufactures, and the

<sup>1</sup>The number of men employed in the iron and steel industries is about 13,000 and the value of the annual output is £2,000,000.

number of tall chimneys increases every year. Italy has a valuable asset for electrical power in her rivers, by means of which the great obstacle to her industrial development—the want of coal—bids fair to be overcome. Electricity is being substituted for the latter in many important manufactures, and electric traction is beginning to be used even on some railways. There are three hundred and seventy miles of electric tramways, and electric trains run between Milan and Monza, between Lecco and Sondrio, between Milan and Varese, and other lines will shortly be started. There are large generating stations near Milan and at Vizzola, and a huge new one has just been opened in the province of Udine.

Among the other industries shipbuilding deserves mention. The number of steamers has doubled within the last few years, and Italian liners rank high both for comfort and speed. The vessels for the fleet are now built entirely in Italy, at Leghorn, Spezia, and Venice. There are many fine harbours on the Italian coast, and it is believed that Genoa, which is now the second port on the Mediterranean, with the opening of the Simplon tunnel will occupy the first place.

Italy is rich in mineral wealth. The chief mining districts are the islands of Sardinia and Elba for iron, zinc, and lead, the province of Grosseto for mercury and iron, the Romagna and Sicily for sulphur. Copper, manganese, and antimony are also found in various places. The number of



VENETIAN BOATS.



mines actually at work has risen from five hundred in 1871 to fourteen hundred in 1898, and the value of the output is £3,000,000.

The total value of the paid-up capital of railways, tramways, shipping companies, commercial and manufacturing concerns, has risen from £54,000,000 in 1887 to nearly £70,000,000 in 1900.

Thus, in spite of the grinding taxation, the odious fiscal system, the neglect, the ignorance, and the past misgovernment, the prosperity of Italy is increasing. The last budget showed a surplus of about £800,000, and the savings banks an annual accumulation of £2,000,000. Wages have risen, food is more plentiful, and clothes are better, while both food and clothing are cheaper. The standard of comfort is rising. The population—at the last census, thirty-three million—is increasing rapidly, and its general health has improved. Agriculture, although not flourishing everywhere, is in a better condition than it has been for a long time. All branches of trade and industry are growing in value and importance with extreme rapidity. Want of capital, which hitherto handicapped every form of national activity, is no longer felt so acutely, and those who have money to invest do not limit themselves exclusively to land and Government bonds, as they did formerly. Now that they see that steel mills, chemical and electrical works, and silk factories are not merely new-fangled fads, but pay real dividends, they are more and more attracted towards them. It

must not, however, be thought that Italy can immediately rise to the financial level of the other great nations. Wonderful as is the increase of her prosperity, economy still remains her first necessity, and extravagance, whether it takes the form of mad colonial adventures or that of useless railways and public works, must be avoided. On the other hand, much remains to be done in the way of improving education and increasing the salaries of officials. These expenses, and a lightening of the burden of taxation, should alone be sufficient to absorb any surplus for years to come.

Another important group of economic questions are those connected with the measures taken or proposed to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and to make the best use of capital. Among these remedies it is necessary to distinguish those initiated by the Government from those worked out by private charity and co-operation. With regard to the former Italy has hitherto made but little provision for the lower classes. The various political parties have all been more or less indifferent to them; it is only of late years that something has been done in this direction; two legislative experiments of a social nature have been made. The first is the *Cassa Nazionale di Previdenza*, a sort of attenuated old-age pension scheme. Similar proposals had from time to time come before Parliament, but they were never seriously discussed. But in 1898 a national fund with a capital of £400,000 was established, to which

are added every year half the profits of the Post Office Savings Banks. No one is obliged to contribute to it, but every one who does so has an equal sum (not exceeding 9s. 7d.) put to his credit. The annual premium is from 4s. 9d. to £4. The pension begins after twenty-five years' insurance, at the age of sixty or sixty-five. A man who begins to insure at the age of twenty and invests 10d. a month, with an annual bonus of 8s., will receive an annuity of £10 11s. or £13 at sixty, or at sixty-five of £17 15s. 3d. or £23 16s. If he becomes invalid before sixty, and he has been insured for at least five years, his annuity begins at once. The larger savings banks and the friendly societies act as the local agencies of the fund. This fund has some drawbacks, but it is a step in the right direction.

The second experiment in State socialism is the Employers' Liability Act. A fund somewhat similar to the old-age pension fund was established in 1883 for insurance against accidents, and many large employers of labour insured their men in it. Insurance was not obligatory, and the greater number of workmen were uninsured. But by the law of 1898 every employer is obliged to insure his men against fatal accidents and those entailing more than five days' absence from work, and to pay the whole cost of the insurance himself. The insurance is made in the Fund of 1883, or in any other approved institution. If a workman is killed, a sum equivalent to five years' wages (but

not less than £120) is paid to his family. If totally disabled, an equal sum is paid in the form of a pension. The scheme met with considerable opposition, not only on the part of the employers of labour from selfish motives, but also on the part of the lawyers in Parliament, on account of the clause in the bill which renders the insurance obligatory even for accidents caused by the workman's own negligence with no fault on the employer's part. This provision is, strictly speaking, in opposition to a clause of the Civil Code, and in consequence it nearly wrecked the whole bill. However, the measure has been found to work satisfactorily.

There is no poor law in Italy. No one has the right to be maintained by the State unless he be infirm, insane, or an infant. A certain amount of begging is allowed, and there are a few asylums for the poor (*ricoveri di mendicità*), but their number is inadequate. The poor have a right to free medical attendance, and the health of the people is looked after in various ways.<sup>1</sup> But if legislation on this point is deficient, Italy is well provided with splendid charities, many of them of very ancient date. There are richly endowed orphanages, hospitals, lunatic asylums, deaf-and-

<sup>1</sup>No one may practise as a physician, surgeon, veterinary surgeon, chemist, or midwife, without a certificate from a university or special school. All kinds of food are subjected to careful inspection, and purveyors of unsanitary victuals are severely punished.

dumb establishments, and schools for the blind, all founded by private charity, and only subsidised by the State or the communes to a very limited extent. Milan, Florence, Genoa, Bologna, and Siena are particularly rich in these foundations, the total value of which is estimated at £68,000,000. In Siena there is a curious institution called the *Monte dei Paschi*; it is the oldest joint-stock bank in existence, but it devotes enormous sums out of its annual profits to charities, scholarships, prizes, hospitals, etc. In 1890 a law was passed establishing in every commune a *Congregazione di Carità*, or Council of Charity, composed of members appointed by the Municipal Council. It controls the smaller charities, educational foundations, and reformatories. Sometimes very small endowments for purposes which are no longer useful are diverted by this body to other channels.

Private charity is still active in Italy, and every year new bequests for charitable purposes are made. Of course the poverty even of the upper classes reflects on their capacity to give to the poor, and it is not easy to raise a sum even for the most necessary objects at short notice. The rich, on the whole, are not very prone to give their personal aid to charitable work, and many ladies join charitable committees merely as a fashionable amusement. Still, charity is a growing force, especially in the North, and many people of means devote the greater part of their time and their fortunes to alleviating the sufferings of the poor. In

the South, unfortunately, the aristocracy, with a few honourable exceptions, are indifferent to the conditions of the starving peasantry and neglect them shamefully. But one of the best traits of the Italian character is the charitableness of the lower classes themselves. The poor will often go without food to feed those who are poorer. For instance, two servants whom I knew, gave money to help maintain the child of a former fellow-servant who had made an unhappy marriage, her husband having not only ill-treated her, but actually swindled these very servants out of a part of their hard-earned savings. Among the poorest classes one constantly comes across examples of the most beautiful and unassuming charity. One has but to read Dr. Axel Münthe's *Letters from a Mourning City* to see what even the poor of Naples are capable of in the way of self-sacrifice.

The cheap kitchens (*cucine economiche*), which exist in most Italian towns, managed by communities of ladies, who take turns in superintending them and tasting the food every day, are one of the most useful forms of private charity. They supply soup, vegetables, meat, wine, etc., at cost price, and sell vouchers which outsiders may buy to give to the deserving poor. Of course, from the fact that charity is unorganised, and dependent on private benevolence past and present, it follows that some towns are well endowed with benevolent foundations, while others are deficient, and usually the poorer provinces, which stand in



A KITCHEN AT MONTE OLIVETO



greater need of help, have fewer charities. There is a large number of well-managed charity schools and homes. Politics as a rule have very little influence on charity, and those who give, give without considerations of party. The Clericals, however, have instituted many excellent charitable establishments, the benefits of which only professing Catholics may enjoy. The Socialists are opposed to all charity, as they fear that by helping the poor they may diminish the number of the discontented and thus lose recruits for their party.

The extreme thriftiness and frugality of the Italian people of all classes is very noteworthy. This quality has produced a movement which forms a most hopeful feature of modern Italian life, and is one of the chief causes of the country's economic revival. Savings banks, co-operative societies, of all sorts, and friendly societies abound in Italy. The best English and German examples have been imitated, but adapted to local conditions. The advantage and originality of the Italian system lies in its unity of purpose. The institutions themselves all exist elsewhere, but nowhere do they work in such perfect harmony with each other. The movement has organised the thriftiness of the Italian people into an active force for good which has done much to combat usury, to diminish the number of middlemen, and to make dishonest speculation difficult. The first object aimed at is of course thrift, which makes the saving up of capital possible. This is

achieved by the three forms of co-operation—co-operation for consumption, for production, and for credit. Co-operation of the first sort has done wonders in Italy. Large stores on the line of the Army and Navy stores have been started at Milan (*Unione Co-operativa*), at Rome (*Unione Militare*), and elsewhere. Their object is not only to sell good wares cheaply, but also to form large reserves of capital, part of which is employed to create systems of thrift, and part to stimulate production. Besides these large stores there are thousands of small co-operative societies (usually connected with friendly societies), which not only help their members when in difficulties, but try to improve the conditions of their daily life.

Co-operation for production is on a smaller scale, and has not proved so successful, except as regards co-operative dairies. The latter have answered admirably in Lombardy and Venetia. The first was started at Agordo (province of Belluno) in 1872, with twelve members. Now it has a hundred members, and there are a hundred and thirty-five other co-operative dairies in the same province. One of the most perfect of these establishments is that of Pieve di Soligo (province of Treviso). They are particularly useful in districts where small properties abound; the farmers and small landowners who could not afford to start dairies of their own send all the milk which they do not need for domestic use to the co-operative dairy, where it is made into cheese, butter, cream,

etc., according to all the latest scientific methods, and sold. Working-men's productive societies, although favoured by the law of 1889, have not proved very satisfactory, as they are easily outbid by speculators, who offer more solid guarantees, and are backed by larger capital.

Co-operation for credit is the most successful form of all. It has been said that "it has created wealth wherever it existed in germ." It arose from the necessity engendered by bad times. By saving a little here and a little there, by clubbing together with others who have also saved a little, the Italian people have built up a vast system of popular credit which makes capital accessible to the smallest shopkeepers and farmers. Savings having been created, the next question was how to make the best use of them. The answer was supplied by the savings banks, the people's banks, the *casse rurali*, while the co-operative and friendly societies acted in the same way, and all these accumulations were devoted to the improvement of agriculture and industry.

The first savings bank was opened in 1822, but the great development of the movement only began in 1884. Now there are over five thousand savings banks, including those of the Post Office; the deposits amount to £82,000,000, the annual accumulations to no less than £2,000,000, and the number of depositors to five million three hundred thousand. They encourage thrift and devote their profits to charity and other useful

purposes. They apply the savings of the dwellers in the towns to the improvement of agriculture, they lend on mortgages, encourage co-operation, and invest in high-class securities. The Minister of Agriculture has a certain control over them. They pay interest at the rate of two to six per cent.

Besides the savings banks there are the people's banks, first founded in the early sixties by Signor Luigi Luzzatti, a former Minister of Finance, in various parts of Lombardy and Venetia. Their numbers have now greatly increased, and they are to be found all over Italy.<sup>1</sup> Their functions are to advance money and make small loans at low rates of interest for agricultural and commercial purposes to the shareholders. The shares cannot exceed £4 in value, and no one may hold more than £200 worth. They enable the small farmer and peasant proprietor to buy chemical manures, agricultural machinery, seed, cattle, etc., almost at cost price. Both these banks and the savings banks are in close touch with another institution for the benefit of agriculture—the local agrarian committee (*Comizio Agrario*). The committees are official bodies composed of the chief landowners, farmers, and agricultural specialists of each district, and they send annual reports to the Ministry of Agriculture on all rural matters. The same people who form the committees also

<sup>1</sup> Number of banks, 720; total of deposits (1897), £14,880,000.

club together to form agricultural syndicates for the purchase of expensive machinery and the introduction of improvements on a large scale and of general interest, such as irrigation. An institution peculiar to Italy is the itinerant chair of agriculture. The above-mentioned local bodies appoint an agricultural specialist to go on circuit and give lectures on farming and practical advice.

Friendly societies (*società di mutuo soccorso*) are very numerous, and are to be found in all trades. Their members receive help in case of illness or accident, and they too promote co-operation. Some of them are composed exclusively of working men, others admit a few honorary members to help in the management of the society, others accept non-workmen as ordinary members. Another mutual aid institution is the *Camera di Lavoro*, or Labour Exchange. The first to be started, and also the most important, is that of Milan, which has over eight thousand members and an income of nearly £1000 a year, and is subsidised by the Municipal Council. Others have been opened in all the larger towns of Italy. Their object is to organise the working classes according to their trades, to promote education, both general and technical, among the artisans, and to form arbitration committees in disputes between capital and labour. They also act as labour registries, and try to find work for the unemployed. They do not guarantee the honesty of the men they recommend, but they recommend no one who has not

a satisfactory certificate from a recent employer. In many ways they are useful institutions, but, unfortunately, the character of many of them has somewhat changed, and they now show a tendency to meddle with politics and become socialist clubs.

These and other forms of co-operation, thrift, and association have been, and are still, most important institutions, and according to many authorities they have saved Italy from financial disaster during the long economic crisis from which she is only now emerging. While incapable and unscrupulous politicians were squabbling among themselves and muddling away the country's resources, the farmers, the manufacturers, and the traders, both large and small, were working out her salvation and their own.





## CHAPTER V

### SOCIAL LIFE IN TOWN AND COUNTRY

TWO very characteristic features of Italian social life are the greater importance of the town, and the division of society into many separate centres. Social life may be said to exist only in the towns. All festivities, social amusements, social conventions, are for the town. When you are in the country you discard all etiquette, and you live a simpler life. People who wish to keep up appearances on small means make a brave show in town for a few months, and then go and economise in the country. Even the richest people, when they go for their *villeggiatura*, take fewer fine clothes, less jewelry, and do without many things that in town are considered indispensable. But when we say town life, we do not mean the life of the capital. Every Italian town has its own society, its own aristocratic circles, its own social customs. The society of Rome is not smarter or more brilliant than that of Milan, Genoa, Turin, or Naples. The smaller towns, too, have their own "best families" and social world. Even now there is little tendency to

concentrate in the capital. The only change is that the richer families of the smaller places sometimes migrate to the chief town of the province or "region."<sup>1</sup> Thus many of the wealthiest Tuscan families have houses in Florence, and those of Lombardy dwell mostly in Milan. But as a rule each family is attached to its native place, where its importance is recognised, and prefers it to other large centres, where it is almost unknown.

As I have said, Italian social life is centred in the towns. Every nobleman, every *bourgeois*, has his headquarters in a town. The chief seat of each family is its town residence. The family may own vast estates in various parts of the country, and fine villas, but its name is always most intimately associated with a *palazzo* in a town. The causes of this state of things are various. In the case of the old burgher aristocracy of Central Italy, Lombardy, and Venice, the reason is clear. But it is the same with Piedmont, with Sicily, and with the Neapolitan provinces, where the great families are all of feudal origin. The insecurity of the country in the days of constant foreign invasions and of brigandage, and the isolation caused by the absence of good roads, have engendered in the

<sup>1</sup>The Italian word *regione* denotes the old divisions of the country corresponding more or less to the states that existed before the unification. These regions are sixteen in number, of which the former Kingdom of Naples contained six.

Italian mind a love of urban life which changed conditions have failed to eradicate. It exists not only among the upper classes, but also in the lower ranks of society. In many parts of Italy, especially in the South, owing to the prevalence of malaria, the peasantry live in villages and small towns rather than in isolated farmhouses. In Apulia there are many towns of twenty or thirty thousand inhabitants which by day are absolutely deserted, save for a few old or infirm people, as the whole able-bodied population has gone out to work in the fields.

This is how Italians of the better class divide their life. Six months of the year are spent in town, usually from December to June. The rest of the year is passed in the country. A part of the summer—preferably the months of July and August—is devoted, in the case of those who can afford it, to a visit to the seaside, to some inland watering-place, or to foreign travel. Some families leave town definitely after Easter, and stay in the country until winter. Others stay in town from November to the beginning of July, especially if they live in a large town such as Rome or Milan, where there is more to attract them. Families who have no country seats are away from the middle of July to the middle or end of September only.

The centre of Italian social life is the Court. For many it is a very distant centre, never seen, perhaps, but still the centre. As the provincial

aristocracy does not go to Rome, the Court has to go into the provinces. There is usually some member of the royal family residing in Florence, in Turin, and in Naples, and the other cities are visited in turn by the King or his nearest relatives. The Italian Court, like English judges, goes on circuit. In all the chief towns of Italy there is a royal palace, and one or more villas in the vicinity. The residences of the rulers of the former various Italian States have been, with very few exceptions, maintained as royal residences, constituting by no means a small item in the expenses of his Majesty, even with the large civil list which he enjoys (£494,000 a year). The Court of Italy has somewhat democratic tendencies, and the rules of precedence are not very strict, and admittance into the charmed circle of royalty is not very difficult. Many of the members of the nobility have more or less honorary Court functions, but besides the regular ladies and gentlemen-in-waiting on the King, Queen, and Royal Princes in each city, there is a number of members of the aristocracy who are in attendance on their Majesties whenever that city is visited by the Court. To be received at Court it is sufficient to know one of the ladies or gentlemen-in-waiting, and to write and ask for an audience, which is rarely refused. A large number of people have a right to be invited to Court functions, and others can obtain an invitation without much difficulty. Court dress is hardly ever worn,

but officers of the Army and Navy, Cabinet Ministers, and certain high officials wear uniforms, which give a brilliant appearance to all entertainments at the Palace. The members of the Italian royal family have always been good hosts, and the Dowager-Queen Margherita was more than usually excellent in that respect; her charming cordiality and grace of manner are, indeed, proverbial. Her daughter-in-law bids fair to prove a worthy successor.

The fashionable season in Italy is from Christmas to Easter—the time generically known as the Carnival. At Naples, Messina, and some other places there is also a summer season. Social life among the upper classes is not really very different from what it is in other countries, but there are certain peculiarities which should be remarked. Italians, even in the grandest establishments, do not wear evening dress for dinner, unless there is a party. A black coat is enough for ordinary purposes. A few men who wish to be particularly fashionable wear a smoking coat with a black tie, which garment is sufficient for all save very large dinner-parties and balls. On the other hand, there are occasions when a man dons his dress clothes by day. It is *de rigueur* at Court functions even in the morning, and at weddings. Ladies wear hats at the theatre, except on gala nights. They display more jewelry by day than English ladies. The Italian aristocracy have magnificent jewels, and even in quite small towns,

where there is no great wealth, the old families can make a fine display. The tall hat is only necessary at marriages, funerals, and at Court. Young men of fashion wear it also when paying calls during the season. Among the *bourgeoisie* evening clothes are hardly ever worn at all. There is a considerable contrast in the matter of dress among Italians. Some attach an exaggerated importance to it, and with most members of the *jeunesse dorée* it is the chief subject of thought and conversation. On the other hand, there are many excellent people who are studiously neglectful of everything connected with dress. So great is their fear of being taken for empty-headed fops, that they purposely wear ill-cut clothes, refuse to put on evening dress on any occasion, and try to look as untidy as they can. Women, however, even of the lower class, dress very smartly, and devote much time, thought, and money to their attire.

The principal social functions during the season are afternoon receptions and balls. A few large gatherings of this sort—sometimes only one or two—are given by the principal families of the place every year. Dinner-parties are not as common as in England, and are only given as a rule by the aristocracy; but a few friends are often asked to drop in to dinner or luncheon in an informal way. In the North people are very hospitable, and in some families there are guests at meals every day. In Central Italy hospitality is not so

conspicuous, and in the smaller places, both there and in the South, you may know people for years without ever having been inside their house. A curious instance of provincial hospitality came to my notice in a small Tuscan town. A lady of very noble birth and of considerable wealth was giving a musical party—it was the first time she had invited friends to her house that season. The entertainment began at two P.M. and lasted till seven. No refreshments were provided for the guests, but at half-past four a servant appeared and solemnly presented a cup of chocolate to the hostess and one to her mother. This, of course, would only be possible in a very provincial town; in the more civilised spots excellent refreshments are always offered to the guests. All over Italy social life is characterised by a great love of outward show. But the farther south one goes, the more pronounced does this feature become, and more is sacrificed for the sake of appearances. In Naples and Palermo life is not considered worth living without a carriage. The following anecdote illustrates this feeling. An American gentleman, who was spending the winter in Naples, had taken a flat in a *palazzo*, the first floor of which was occupied by a noble family in somewhat reduced circumstances. He noticed to his surprise that every day he met a servant going up or down the stairs carrying a pair of carriage doors. At last the mystery was explained. The said noble family shared a carriage with some other people,

but each had its own doors with the family coat-of-arms, to make their friends believe that they both had carriages! The same spirit, in a modified form, prompts people to give only one or two balls on a grand scale every season, rather than entertain frequently in a quiet way. From the picturesque point of view, however, the system is to be commended, as the splendid palaces with which every Italian town is adorned are unquestionably most suitable for large gatherings.

Social etiquette is in some respects laxer, in others more rigid, than in England. When a hostess invites her friends to luncheon or dinner, she is not tortured by anxiety lest the number of men should not correspond exactly to that of the ladies. The latter do not get up from the table before the gentlemen, but the whole party rises almost immediately after dinner, and adjourns to the drawing-room, where nearly every one, of both sexes, smokes. At parties the servants hand round cigarettes with the refreshments, to ladies and gentlemen alike. At a ball a man is not obliged to stick to his partner through a whole dance; one or two turns are enough, after which he may favour some other damsel without causing offence to the first.

On the other hand, certain rules are observed with the greatest strictness. In the first place, you are the slave of the visiting card. If a gentleman is casually introduced to a married lady, even if he does not exchange two words with her, he

must leave his card for her and for her husband (if she has one) within forty-eight hours. Even a casual introduction to a man, strictly speaking, necessitates an exchange of pasteboard, but it is not so rigidly enforced. If you fail to do your duty in the card line, you are regarded as an ill-mannered boor, or the omission is taken as equivalent to a desire not to know the person you have met. Moreover, at New Year's you are obliged to leave cards for all your friends and acquaintances. Another rule which you must be careful to observe is not to be seen too often in the company of a young girl. If you speak to her or dance with her too often, there will probably be rumours that you are engaged to her, which may be awkward. Also the subjects of conversation are strictly limited, and although you may talk to a married lady in a far freer manner than would be considered seemly in England, you cannot be too careful as to what you say to an unmarried girl, and you may shock her by saying things to which no English girl would object.

A peculiarly Italian form of social life is the evening "at home." A great many ladies of society are at home to their friends every evening, and some few *habitués* are always sure to drop in. If a larger number than usual appear, a little dance may be improvised, or some music. The older guests retire into one room to play cards, whilst the young people amuse themselves in the other. The door between the two, however, is

open, and the chaperons keep a watchful eye on their charges.

Italians get on well, as a rule, with foreigners, and are glad to welcome those who come to them with letters of introduction; but they are somewhat chary of receiving foreign residents in the country. Where there is a large foreign colony, its members are seldom found in purely Italian houses. Among some old-fashioned folk there is a certain prejudice against all outsiders, but it is fast disappearing. Quite a number of the noblest Italian families have intermarried with foreigners, especially with English people and Americans, and in some families English is habitually spoken. Marriages between Italians and Englishwomen are very frequent amongst the aristocracy and in the army. They are very rare among the *bourgeoisie*.

A considerable part of Italian life is passed out of doors, or rather, out of the house. The drive in the public gardens, the theatre, the *café*, the *circolo* or club, are social functions of great importance. The object of having a carriage is not only the convenience of getting about, but also the necessity of driving out in the park at the fashionable hour. In summer from four to seven, and from two to five in winter, all the ladies of society may be seen driving up and down the public promenades of every large and of many small towns throughout Italy, while the young men lounge about the sidewalks and salute them.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century there was a proviso in the marriage contracts of wealthy Florentines that the husband should take his wife out for a drive in the Cascine for two hours every day. In the smaller centres, where the distances are shorter and where the public promenades are not large enough for a regular drive, one sees fewer carriages, but most of the good families keep them in reserve for grand occasions. In Venice, of course, the gondola takes the place of the carriage, but, curiously enough, there is hardly a family that possesses one of its own. It always belongs to the gondoliers, and is hired together with them. The fittings, however, are the property of the family.

The theatre is another thoroughly social institution. In every town in Italy there is at least one theatre, and in those of any size several. Florence, with barely two hundred thousand inhabitants, has about a dozen. But only one is of social importance; usually it is the opera house, which is subsidised by the municipality. About half the boxes are the freehold property of private individuals, who, when there are performances, occupy them every evening and receive their friends there. A visit to a lady in her box is equivalent to a formal call at her house. In the provincial towns<sup>1</sup> it is not considered good form for a lady to be seen in the stalls. The theatre

<sup>1</sup> A provincial town is one that was not the capital of the state in the period immediately preceding the Union.

is, to a great extent, an excuse for social amusement, and little attention is paid by "the quality" to the performance, save when it is something very exceptional.

The streets and the *café* are places of rendezvous for all classes. The idler section of the *jeunesse dorée* pass more than half the day lounging about the main streets, chattering and gossiping. Even men of business and hard-working professional men prefer to meet in the street or at some *café* to discuss their affairs and see their friends, rather than in their own homes. Different *cafés* are frequented by different classes. One is the resort of the officers, another that of the university professors, another of students, another of lawyers. The ordinary *café* is at best a somewhat dismal resort; it is dusty, stuffy, and uncomfortable; the chairs are apt to collapse, the sofas are dingy, and cleanliness is not remarkable. The refreshments provided are coffee, a sort of rum punch, called "ponch," ices, vermouth, syrups. To some *cafés* gardens are attached, which are pleasant in the summer, and the larger ones have music. In the warm weather they occupy half the street with colonies of chairs and tables. There one sees whole families partaking of light refreshments—father, mother, sons, daughters, baby and nurse, with the perambulator on the pavement.

The *circolo*, or club, is a favourite resort for Italian men. It is, of course, very different from the establishments of Pall Mall and Piccadilly.

It is a simple, unpretentious, plainly furnished building, and has three principal objects: first, it is a place where men go to read the papers—there is rarely a library attached to it; in the second place, it may be a gambling resort, although many of the members do not gamble; thirdly, it is used for organising concerts, theatrical performances, dances, lectures, etc. Sometimes the club has its own theatre. In Rome, Florence, Milan, and one or two other cities, there are clubs on the English plan, which call for no particular mention. Some of the *circoli* or *casini* are of ancient origin, and have curious names, such as *Gli Intronizzati* (the Enthroned Ones), *I Rozzi* (the Rough Ones). These are usually the descendants of the literary and artistic academies of the Renaissance or the eighteenth century. In some places there are two social clubs, one for the aristocracy and one for the *bourgeoisie*, each of which rigidly excludes the members of the other. There are many working-men's clubs, which are useful in providing amusements for the lower classes.

All this outdoor social life goes far to explain the apparent discomfort of most Italian homes. What to an Englishman appears a most uninviting interior, an Italian finds quite adequate for his wants, as so much of his life is spent away from it. When you pass the day at your office or in the streets, and your evenings at the theatre or the *circolo*, any sort of house is good enough to sleep in.

The country is regarded as a place of relaxation and rest. Few people have their headquarters in the country. There are the villas which are merely pleasure resorts, and there are houses in which the landlord stays while looking after his estates.<sup>1</sup> Italians divide their life into two distinct portions,—town life and country life,—and when they go out of town they leave fashion and social conventions behind them. Every one who can possibly manage it goes into the country for the hot months; in the summer almost every town in Italy presents a most deserted appearance, which even London in September cannot equal; for in London there are people in the streets and parks, but in many Italian cities in August the streets are quite empty. Places like Leghorn or Venice, however, are fairly crowded in the summer. The natives are nearly all away, but there is a large influx of *bagnanti*, or se-bathers. In Rome, Florence, Milan, Bologna, Turin, there is not a soul to be seen. Let us, then, follow an Italian family into the country. It resides, say, in Florence, in the winter. At the beginning of July it will migrate to a villa on the family estates. There there is little in the way of society and social amusements. Neighbours visit each other in an informal way, and occasionally drop in to luncheon or to dinner. Sometimes a little country dance is arranged, or private

<sup>1</sup> These latter are often merely *fattorie*, or farm houses, with a few rooms arranged for the *padrone*.



COUNTRY ROAD SCENE.



theatricals. Regular full-dress dinners, parties, large receptions, garden parties, are never given in the country. Both ladies and gentlemen wear their shabbiest clothes, and no one attempts to be smart. In the country you may find a lady whom you had last seen in town attired in the most elaborate Paris gowns and sparkling with diamonds, wearing an old and worn-out gown and slippers, with her hair anyhow, everything pointing to the most absolute disregard for appearances. Everybody gets up early and goes out into the garden or the *bosco* (a little wood, generally behind the house). Six, or even five, is the usual hour for rising during the hot months. The morning is spent walking about the grounds, and attending to such business as requires supervision. The luncheon hour is eleven or twelve, and then follows the siesta from one or two until four. Later there is a drive, a few visits, or an excursion. Dinner (or supper) is at seven, to which a friend or two may be invited, and others will come in afterwards. Next come cards, round games, and gossip, until midnight, or later. In the autumn months the men go out shooting, there is no siesta, and you go to bed earlier.

In the North of Italy a few of the richer people entertain regular house parties on the English plan. But as a rule one or two guests are asked to stay, and standing invitations are given to friends should they be in that neighbourhood.

Some people keep almost open house, especially in the remoter districts, and are delighted to put up any friends who may turn up unexpectedly. On the whole, there is far less entertaining during the *villeggiatura* than is the case in England. There is very little preparation, no elaborately arranged parties, and guests are often expected to stay an indefinite time—a week, a fortnight, or longer. On the other hand, there are many villas where no one is ever invited at all, some families preferring when in the country to lead an absolutely isolated life. But when hospitality is offered, one is received with a most genuine effusion, and the hosts are everything that is kind. The only objection to paying country visits in Italy is, in fact, that they are too kind—they never leave their guests alone. In an English country house the guest has always a part of the day in which he is left to his own resources; but in an Italian villa the hosts would think themselves wanting in hospitality and courtesy if they left him alone even for half an hour. They will not allow him to go out by himself, but depute some one to go with him. If he wishes to read or write letters, some one is sent to keep him company. Only the hour of the siesta is sacred. If an excursion has been arranged but the guest is tired and wishes to stay at home, one of the family will remain at home, so as to amuse him, or the excursion may even be deferred to some future time. The hosts will put themselves

to serious inconvenience rather than leave their guest by himself even for a few hours. This custom comes from the fact that guests are much fewer and farther between than in English country houses. When there are guests constantly in the house it is, of course, impossible to amuse them the whole time.

In Southern Italy the descendants of the old feudal nobility used to live in their ancestral castles in the same way as the French *seigneurs* did before the Revolution; and these strongholds are regarded as the headquarters of the different families, in theory at least, to this day. But as a matter of fact, Neapolitan and Sicilian aristocrats are for the most part confirmed absentees, and spend far less time on their estates than Lombard or Tuscan landlords. People who spend the whole year in the country are looked down upon as quite inferior beings, *gente di campagna*, inferior even to the *bourgeoisie* of small towns like Siena, Perugia, or Padova. This does not, of course, apply to those who dwell in villas in the immediate vicinity of large towns, as a few of the nobility do. These, although from the architect's point of view they are country houses, socially are merely town residences outside the walls, and their owners come into town every day and live like the other city folk. This is not in any sense country life, and the regular *villeggiatura* is spent elsewhere. Another type of country house is the palace in the village. When a family owns land

in the neighbourhood of some very small town or village, their residence will probably be in the main street instead of in the open country. This is not quite a town house, although it is called a *palazzo*, for the owners have their winter quarters in a larger town. They are descended, perhaps, from the feudal aristocracy of the days before the city republics, and the village has gradually grown up round the manor-house. In other cases the custom arose from a feeling of insecurity. A typical specimen of this is the magnificent Piccolomini Palace built by Pius II. as a quiet retreat, and still owned by members of his family in the tiny little town of Pienza. The life led in these houses is something between town and country life. There is rather more formalism than in the ordinary villa, as the owners have to keep up their dignity in the eyes of the other inhabitants; but there is less restraint in dress and social etiquette than in town. But the custom is somewhat on the decline, as people of consequence are gradually drifting towards the larger centres for the winter, and to villas in the country for the summer. It is still common, however, in Sicily.

In spite of the love which all Italians have for town life, they all desire to possess land, even if they only spend one or two months in the country; in many cases it serves as a safe source of income. Consequently the majority of successful professional or business men buy a few fields and a villa, which serves the double purpose of invest-

ing savings and of providing a *villeggiatura* with a little shooting.

A favourite way of passing the summer is to go to the seaside or to some inland watering-place. Even people who have landed property like to go to the *bagni* for a month or two, if they can afford it. The most popular seaside resorts are Leghorn, Viareggio, Venice, Rimini, Castellamare, Nettuno, Levanto. Life at these Italian Brightons is not unlike that of French *bains-de-mer*, and very different from what it is at similar places in England. There is plenty of gaiety, dancing, music, theatricals, etc. The morning is spent by the sea and in the sea, and all the late afternoon as well. Very often families take a *capanna*, or bathing hut, and spend the whole day in it, going into the sea for a dip "when so disposed." The evenings are passed on the *stabilimento*, where there are "distractions" of various kinds. Everybody meets there and talks; there is next to no private entertaining, as the natives are usually away in the bathing season, and the houses which are let to the *bagnanti* are too small. It is extremely hot at all these resorts, even at night, and when the weather begins to get cool in September, they are at once deserted. No Italian bathes except in July and August. The amount of noise and racket, especially in the hotels, where there is dancing every night, is more easily imagined than described. One of the favourite and most typical Italian inland watering-places is Monte-

catini, charmingly situated among the hills near Pistoja. Thousands of people go there every year to drink the waters, which are both effective and nasty, while amusements enliven the afternoons and the evenings. Valdieri is an Alpine summer resort, much frequented by the Piedmontese; Vallombrosa and Camaldoli are more aristocratic and expensive, and very much quieter. It is surprising what a large amount of discomfort Italians will put up with at most of these *luoghi di bagni*. The hotels, except in a few places, are most primitive, and lacking in all conveniences, while the lodging-houses and *villini* are ill-furnished, badly built, and almost as noisy as the hotels. Rich families who are used to living in comfortable houses when at home are content to spend two months or more in apartments that are little better than a British working-man's cottage. There is a social convention among Italians that acquaintances made at seaside or other watering-places—*conoscenze di bagni*—need not necessarily be continued in town. People who see each other every day, and are apparently on the most intimate terms, do not even bow when they meet in the streets of Rome, Florence, or Milan.

A certain number of Italians have of late years taken to travelling abroad in the summer; they do not usually go very far, but limit themselves to Switzerland, and to one or two resorts in South Tyrol. A few go farther afield to Germany, France, England, and Austria. They hardly

ever travel in the spring or the winter, although some occasionally go to the Riviera. There are still many Italians of considerable wealth and high social position who have never been outside Italy, or who have at most been once in their lives to Paris and London. The classes which travel most are the Jews and the university professors. The tendency to travel, however, is slowly growing among all classes.



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## CHAPTER VI

### HOME LIFE AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN

**I**N this department of Italian life more than in any other do we find marked differences in every detail, not only between Lombardy and Sicily, between Venetia and Tuscany, but even between neighbouring towns. Hence it is particularly difficult to give an idea of Italian domestic life. All we can do is to touch on one or two general features which distinguish it from that of other countries, and to describe a few interesting local characteristics.

First the home. This is not such an important national institution as it is in England. There is no Italian word which exactly corresponds to "home." *Casa* is the usual equivalent, but it is applicable to any dwelling-place. The Italian's real home is his native town or village, and he cares little for the comfort or prettiness of his house. We have already seen what a large part of an Italian's life is passed out of his house, in the streets, at the *café*, at the theatre, and, of course, at his daily work. Hence he is not disposed to spend much time or money on making

himself comfortable at home. The only really comfortable and pretty houses are those of the very rich, or those where the mistress is of foreign birth. Even the rich often combine magnificence and profusion with ugliness and discomfort. Italians usually prefer to spend their money on theatres, on clothes, on choice wines, rather than on their dwellings.

The architecture of Italian buildings naturally varies according to the time in which they were built. The splendid old palaces of Rome, Florence, Milan, and Venice are too well known to require description. Their perfect proportions, their vast size, their rows of barred windows, their beautifully carved balconies and cornices, are familiar even to those who have never been to Italy. Here, again, we notice many differences of style, from the severe and simple stateliness of Florence and Rome, to the exquisite delicacy and elegance of Venice and Siena. As to the newer buildings, there is little, alas! to be said in their favour. Domestic architecture is a lost art in Italy. Modern architects either reproduce the old buildings minus their grace and proportions, thus creating hybrid monstrosities, or they erect purely modern houses without a semblance of architectural beauty. The object is that the buildings should have a regular and uniform appearance. An instance of this mania is the introduction in most houses of a number of false windows, which are sometimes provided with real

shutters. There is but little attempt to make a house nice and attractive; everything is sacrificed to the regular façade, with the same number of windows on each side of the door, balconies only in the middle, and a perfectly even surface, with never a bow window or other individual feature. The cause of this poverty of design is that Italian architects are mostly engineers—*ingegneri-architetti*—and have had a purely mathematical training. They can tell you “many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse,” but they know nothing of architecture as a fine art. That is the secret of the hideous buildings which have disfigured so many Italian towns, Rome and Florence in particular.

The interiors present many peculiarities. There is one feature about Italian town houses which offers a decided advantage over most English ones, and that is their more reasonable number of stairs. This refers not only to flats, in which the majority of the inhabitants of the towns dwell; but even to the *villini*, or separate houses, now coming very much into vogue, which never have more than three stories, and often only two. The average London house, with its five or six stories, and only one or two rooms on each—the most absurd type ever conceived—is unknown in Italy. *Villini* have many defects, but the fact that in them there are five or six rooms on each story covers a multitude of sins. An Italian flat, too, is a very different affair from an English flat—five



VENDRAMIN PALACE ON THE GRAND CANAL



small rooms ten feet high, up twelve flights of stairs, and rent £300 a year. The great palaces are all divided up into flats of various sizes. Some apartments contain twenty or thirty rooms, many of which are of enormous size. Often the owner of the palace occupies the first floor—the *piano nobile*—with an *entresol* for his servants, while the other floors are let separately. Sometimes, especially in Rome, the buildings are so large that the half of one floor makes a magnificent apartment.

A typical *quartiere* in one of these great palaces consists of from five to ten splendid reception-rooms, a dining-room, and a number of bedrooms. The reception-rooms are the chief feature of the house, and often the bedrooms are sacrificed to them. These rooms are nearly always *en suite*, and so arranged that when a large party is given the guests may walk through all of them and come back to the point whence they started without retracing their steps. This constitutes the *giro*, which it is the ambition of every hostess to have. The floors are of marble, and in the large rooms only partially carpeted, owing to the vast expense of covering the acres of floor. In the smaller rooms there are carpets in winter, but they are a comparatively modern innovation, and in the remoter parts of the country you find nothing but a few small rugs or islands of carpet here and there. The large rooms seem somewhat scantily furnished, but with good

old furniture. There are rich hangings on the windows and the walls. The former are of great height, and narrow in proportion. The ceilings are frescoed, possibly by Michelangelo, and there are some good pictures—a Holy Family by Raphael, with the portrait of one of the host's ancestors in a corner, another portrait of an ancestor who was a pope, by Titian, and a few more works collected subsequently. There is an air of stateliness and grandeur about these vast Italian palaces that is found nowhere else. In one palace in Florence the drawing-room is so enormous that one corner is used as a billiard-room, with a full-sized table; another part is devoted to music, and is occupied by a concert grand; another part is the hostess's boudoir; and all the rest serves as an ordinary reception-room. When a dance is given, the carpet is partly rolled up, some of the furniture is pushed aside, and there is a ballroom ready for use. Roman houses are even larger.

All over Italy there are numbers of old palaces whose owners have gone down in the world, which in consequence have been sold and let in small apartments or lodgings. A flat of a dozen rooms in a *cinquecento* mansion may often be rented for an absurdly small sum, especially in the smaller towns—for £20 to £40 a year. But these houses, while preserving their external magnificence, are very much changed inside. Where formerly there were three stories, now there are six, and windows have been partially

blocked up or divided, so as to light two rooms. The huge *sala* in which kings and emperors have been entertained is cut up into half a dozen small *camere*, the priceless paintings and rare stuffs have given place to cheap German papers and ghastly oleographs. The windows and doors do not shut properly, and cold draughts of air come in. In the place of the great *cassoni* and stately furniture of the past, we find broken-down, tawdrily decorated sofas and unstable chairs and tables. All bespeaks neglect and decay. Yet perhaps in some forgotten corner we may come upon a piece of good old majolica; on a ceiling we see traces of a fresco; in one of the rooms a fine *quattrocento* mantelpiece, the last relics of the departed glory of the owners.

When the floors are not of marble they are of brick or *terrazzo*. In the country brick floors are universal. If the brick is covered with a coating of oil paint it is smooth and cleanly. But the ordinary unpainted floor is somewhat disagreeable. If you jump out of bed in the morning and forget your slippers, your feet get covered with red brick dust, and any object which you drop on the floor assumes the same hue. *Terrazzo* floors, which are very common in Lombardy and Venetia, are made by laying down a thick layer of plaster and inserting little bits of coloured stone or marble, either in patterns or indiscriminately; the surface is afterwards well polished. They are satisfactory and pretty, and last a very long time.

Parquet floors are found in a few houses in the chief towns, but plain wooden floors are unknown save in Alpine and other mountain districts.

Italians are much less particular about warmth in their homes than Northern nations. Although they very much object to the cold in the open air, and often keep indoors, put off a journey, or break an appointment if the weather is bad, they do not care how cold it is in the house. They are astonished if they see foreigners out of doors without thick overcoats in winter, but they can work for hours in an icy cold office or a fireless room. There seems to be a sort of legend that Italy is a warm country; but it is by no means in accordance with fact. It is far colder in Italy for a few months of the year than it is in most parts of England. There was until not so many years ago a prejudice among Italians that fires were unhealthy and that they gave headaches, and some old-fashioned people are still of that opinion. The cold which one suffers in the huge, carpetless, fireless rooms of an old *palazzo* is impossible to conceive. Even where there is a fireplace it is small and inadequate to warm such vast spaces. If you wish to keep fairly comfortable there is nothing for it but to sit in the fireplace. It is usually so constructed that a maximum of warmth goes up the chimney and a minimum into the room. Iron stoves have of late years been introduced; they give out heat, generally accompanied with nauseous smells; some provide the smell

without the heat, but produce a draught instead. Where there is neither fireplace nor stove the only alleviation is a *scaldino*, a small earthenware vessel filled with hot cinders, over which you warm your hands. It is a picturesque utensil,—I have seen a curate on his way back to England from Italy with no fewer than four *scaldini* by way of loose luggage,—but hardly comforting. In the North of Italy houses are adequately heated by means of a *calorifère*, a system of hot pipes extending all over the building. In Turin, in the large blocks of flats there is a furnace in the basement, which is lighted once a day and warms the whole house. This system is largely adopted in Rome, to a certain extent in Florence, and is extending to other parts of Italy. It constitutes an undoubted improvement on the *scaldino*.

The bedrooms, as I have remarked, are often sacrificed to the reception-rooms. In old houses they are gloomy and cheerless, and overlook damp courtyards, but they are sometimes richly decorated with silk or tapestry hangings, and there are gorgeous coverlets on the beds. In the modern houses they are uncomfortable and badly arranged. The sanitary arrangements, save in the chief towns, are of the most primitive description, and even in the houses of the great there are sometimes things too hideous to be whispered abroad. The morning tub is not affected by Italians in a general way. A bath once, or at

most twice, a week is considered ample. Foreigners who indulge in a cold bath in winter are regarded in the same light as people who attempt to climb the Matterhorn without a guide or to cross the Atlantic in an open boat. At the same time, real dirt is not common in Italian houses. The beds are always clean, and generally very comfortable, especially if one comes from Germany or Austria.

The houses are built round a courtyard, which gives light to the back rooms. Sometimes there is a garden in it, or else the courtyard is open on one side and the garden extends to the back. Venetian palaces are built on a different plan. There is a central hall going from end to end of the house, with a large three-light or five-light window and balcony in the front, and smaller windows at the back. All the other rooms on the same floor open out on to this *sala*, which is often from eighty to one hundred feet in length, and of beautiful proportions. In winter, as it is difficult to warm, it is little used, but in summer it forms a delightfully cool lounge. The same arrangement prevails on each floor, save on the ground floor, which contains merely an entrance hall, furnished with a few wooden benches, and some rooms for the gondola fittings, stores, etc. Venetian apartments are the most charming of any in Italy, and can be made comfortable and pretty at a minimum of expense. A peculiarity of Venetian houses is that they are sold freehold

in parts. The same system is followed in Naples and a few other places.

Houses of Milan have a characteristic feature in the situation of the porter's lodge. The *porte-cochère* is closed with an iron gate, and the only way of entering the building is through the lodge at the side. As the *concierge* is always married, and usually has five small children, the place is untidy and sometimes dirty. The object of this arrangement—that no one may enter without being seen by the *concierge*—might easily have been achieved in a less unpleasant way. It is typical of the manner in which rich and poor live in close contact. In the same way no Italian objects to living over a shop. The ground floors of many fine palaces are let as warehouses and shops, while the upper floors are the dwellings of the nobility.

The average middle-class interior is decidedly unæsthetic. The *bourgeois* family lives in a flat or in a small *villino*. The drawing-room is never used, save on the hostess's "at home" day. On the mantelpiece there are paper flowers under glass, a pair of blue and magenta vases, and a large clock. The walls are decorated with an arsenic green pattern on a red ground. Opposite the mantelpiece is a sofa to seat three, covered with brown rep or some other ugly material; on the antimacassar we see realistically depicted a boy in red knickerbockers with a hoop. On the floor there is no carpet, but by the sofa is a rug,

bearing a lifelike representation of a lion woven in yellow, and on the stools we see images of dogs and cats, or men on horseback, ornamented with beads. Round the sofa six chairs covered with yellow cotton velvet are arranged in a semicircle, so that when the hostess is at home her guests may form a *circolo*. There are hundreds of photographs of queer-looking people on the walls—brides in white, men in hats and coats of 1840, women attired in various fashions down to 1870, family groups, babies, short-haired schoolboys, some half a dozen enlarged portraits of the *paterfamilias*, the *materfamilias*, and their respective parents, in huge black frames. The artistic element is represented by two or three oleographs of *The Lovers' Parting*, *Mother's Darling*, *Naughty*, some Japanese fans, and a varied assortment of cotillon favours. On a bamboo table covered with red plush and gold fringe we observe a collection of nicknacks, such as boat-shaped ashtrays, pin-cushions made like horseshoes, plates of what look like delicious fruit: you touch them, but, alas! they are only alabaster, which cunning hands at "lordly Volaterræ" have worked into the forms of apples and pears. The dining-room is plainly furnished, and with little pretence at decoration—fortunately. It is used as a sitting-room for everyday purposes. Few servants are kept, sometimes only one, at most two, in a large and quite well-to-do family. The *materfamilias* and her daughters do a good deal of the house-

work, and even open the front door on occasion. The bedrooms are scantily and simply furnished, with an eye to use rather than to ornament, and are somewhat untidy.

Country villas are of two kinds. Some were built as summer residences for well-to-do families, while others were mere dwelling-places for the landlord to sleep in when visiting his estates. The two types have gradually merged into one, but the difference of origin is still noticeable. The villas of the first sort are often magnificent structures, with beautiful terraces, fine large rooms, and delightful gardens. Those built for wealthy Venetians, Florentines, Romans, and Milanese are unsurpassed in their way. Many were designed by the princes of architecture and decorated by the greatest artists of the Renaissance. Everybody knows the villas of the Italian lakes, those around Florence, those of the Veneto. One of the most perfect examples of the Italian country seat is Baron Ricasoli's castle of Brolio in the Chianti district. It is a large red brick pile, with Gothic windows, standing on a broad stone platform; behind it are the tower, the thirteenth-century chapel, the outbuildings, forming a courtyard, reached from the outside by a winding road that passes through a portcullised gate. The stone platform extends behind the house, allowing space for a garden. Inside there are some splendid apartments; in the vast dining-hall is a large oak table down the middle, which,

as it is only used on grand occasions, is covered with beautiful old brass ware and choice majolica. The family usually dine at a round table in a recess formed by a bow window at the end of the room. The walls are covered with old armour. The drawing-room is a large bright apartment, with many windows opening on to the terrace. A table is covered with newspapers and reviews in four languages, and there are books everywhere. Up-stairs the library is filled with rare and interesting books of all kinds. Hidden away in one corner of this great building are three small rooms furnished with extreme simplicity. These are the pride and glory of the family, for in them dwelt the great Bettino Ricasoli, statesman and patriot, dictator of Tuscany, one of the finest characters of the Italian *Risorgimento*. Architecturally, however, Brolio is a castle rather than a villa. More typical are the villas Emo and Maser in Venetia, Fontallerta, Poggio Gherardo, and Rusciano near Florence, those near Rome, and some round the Bay of Naples and at Ravello.

Nowadays few villas are kept up in their old-time magnificence, and money is saved up for the town house. To the villa old and discarded furniture is sent, and few things are renewed when worn out. Pictures and valuable furniture are usually sent into town. The walls are unpapered, and unless there are old frescoes, the decorations are of the simplest. There are fewer carpets even than in the *palazzo*. But the plain whitewashed

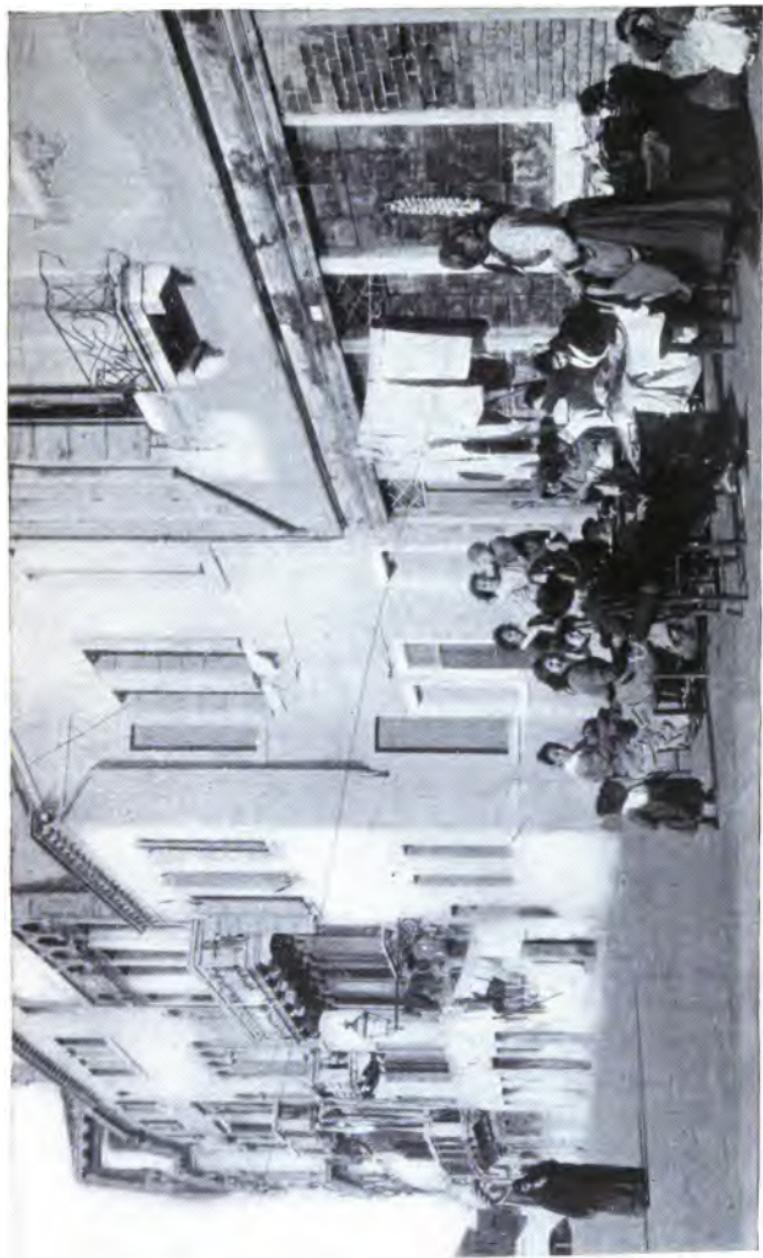
walls are really far more agreeable than the crude schemes of decoration that are found in the average town dwelling. Of course the villas are cold, but then few of them are inhabited in winter, and all the arrangements are made with a view to keeping out the summer heat.

The state of the dwellings of the poor in Italy is a painful subject. They are very squalid and miserable, and the standard of comfort is deplorably low. In the towns the poor dwell in huge tenements—separate cottages for the working classes have yet to be built—lacking in all conveniences, cramped for space, ill-kept, wretchedly furnished, and thoroughly unsanitary. In Naples there are the awful *fondaci*, damp cellars, in each of which several families live huddled up together, wallowing in disease, filth, and vice. In Northern Italy there has been some improvement, and attempts are being made to supply the poor with better accommodation. A lodging-house on the Rowton system has recently been opened in Milan. The country population is rather better off than that of the towns, and in Tuscany the peasantry live in quite decent houses, each family occupying several rooms. Cleanliness, however, is not very conspicuous, save as regards the beds. There is no attempt at decoration, although nature's warm tones and luxuriant vegetation make of the poorest hovel a picture that delights the artist's eye.

Gardens are numerous both in town and

country. One often gets charming glimpses from a dark narrow street of a bright bit of sunny garden seen through the portal of some gloomy old palace. Terrace and roof gardens are common in Rome and in the South. The Italian garden is untidy and carelessly kept in comparison with an English one, but when it is large and old the absence of trim neatness is an added charm. Among the upper classes gardening is a very favourite amusement, and the villa gardens of the Brienza and the lake region are famous.

Another most important feature of home life is food and drink. Italians of the upper and middle classes never eat more than two real meals a day. For breakfast they have a cup of coffee and milk, with sometimes a piece of bread and butter, generally taken in bed. In many parts of the country butter and milk are difficult to get, so that during the *villeggiatura* the morning meal is reduced to black coffee and dry bread. The luncheon hour varies from ten to twelve, and the meal is a more elaborate one than its English counterpart. First comes a dish of eggs, or else maccaroni or some other variety of *paste asciutte* (of the maccaroni family). Then follows meat—stewed, roast, or boiled. The latter, called *lesso*, is a speciality of Italian cookery, and, when properly done, is very appetising. Often there is a *fritto misto* as well—a mixture of fried vegetables, bits of chicken, sweetbread, etc. Then comes a dish of vegetables, in which department Italian cooks are



A VENETIAN STREET SCENE.



masters. Cheese and fruit end the repast. Wine (generally red) is drunk throughout. After luncheon there is always an interval of rest before work and other occupations are resumed. In the hot weather it develops into a siesta. No afternoon tea is taken in purely Italian houses, but where the foreign element is strong the "five o'clock" is common, and the habit is spreading everywhere among the upper classes. In the country sweet wine and biscuits take its place. Many Italians still look upon tea as a medicine, while others tell you they cannot take it as it is bad for their digestion. Smoking is very usual among both sexes in the upper classes, but limited to the men in the middle and lower classes. The dinner hour varies from five to seven. In the country it is often in the middle of the day. It is not unlike an English dinner as regards the arrangement and sequence of the dishes, but, of course, the cooking is different. In purely Italian *ménages* of the middle class, most of the eatables are cooked with oil; when this is good the result is satisfactory, but it is sometimes rancid, and then—. Pudding is usually provided only on Sundays and Thursdays. Italians generally eat very little sugar, and look upon jam as a great luxury. Many dishes are flavoured with garlic. Wine is the most typical feature of an Italian dinner. Everybody drinks it. There are few drunkards in Italy, but no teetotallers. At a big dinner there are always a great many different kinds of

wine, and each kind is attached to some particular dish. Marsala opens the ball, the red wine of the country begins with the first course and keeps up a running accompaniment all through. A light white wine follows suit, and the roast is heralded by a choice kind of old red wine. On very grand occasions there is champagne, but it is served only after the roast. By the end of dinner there is a very riot of different wines and liquors, all served at once in a bewildering orgy. Unless one is hardened, it will be no easy task to rise from the table. The worst of an Italian dinner, especially in the country, is that you are expected to partake of every dish (generally two helpings) and of every wine. If you refuse anything you are begged and prayed to taste it, as it is a speciality of the district, or home-made. "Do not make compliments with us," your host will say; "you really *must* try it." It is regarded as next door to an offence if you persist in your refusal.

Domestic servants in Italy are, on the whole, very satisfactory. The good ones are about as good as any in the world, faithful, hard-working, honest, easily satisfied, and well mannered. One comes across many a touching instance of servants willing to stay on with a master who is in reduced circumstances, for no wages at all; others go out to earn wages elsewhere and send him part of their salary. There is much more familiarity between master and servant than is the case in England. An old retainer will be consulted on family

affairs, on the advisability of selling this or that piece of land, on changing house, on suitable marriages for the children. They never take advantage of this familiarity, or lose the sense of their position. One servant is quite willing to do another's work, and a butler does not faint at the suggestion that he should sweep the stairs or cook a chop in the absence of the proper functionary. They have no high and mighty airs. There are some, of course, who are anything but honest; but where are there not? They are not always very truthful, and have many delightful euphemisms for explaining away a breakage of crockery or other fault. They are not as scrupulously cleanly as one might wish, nor do they sweep up the dust in an altogether exemplary manner. A cook or housekeeper is in many cases paid a fixed sum a day, out of which she is to find the food for the household; but it is not a universal practice. Servants' wages are very low as compared with English standards. A small middle-class household can get a "general" for from 12s. to 20s. a month plus her food. A cook or a butler in a well-to-do family receives anything from 25s. to £3. Servants always expect wine for lunch and dinner, but in Italy that does not constitute a serious item of expense.

Children are a very conspicuous feature of family life. They are here, there, and everywhere, and are not only seen, but heard. There is no such place as a nursery in an Italian

household. As soon as the children are old enough to sit on a chair they live with their parents the whole day long. When the lady of the house has company, her offspring are generally with her, and are allowed to sprawl over the guests, and, if they can talk, they frequently interrupt their elders or contradict them. Children of six dine with their father and mother, and remain up until ten or eleven o'clock. Babies are sometimes taken to the theatre, and children of five very often. The average Italian mother, especially among the *bourgeoisie*, has absolutely no notion as to how children ought to be brought up. She indulges them in every way, and lets them eat whatever they ask for, and then scolds them for insufficient reasons, but hardly ever punishes them. On the other hand, the father will punish his boys severely, especially if they do not do their lessons properly, and so get bad marks at school. Parents are rarely able to find a just mean between absolute indulgence and unnecessary severity. Young children are allowed to hear and take part in conversation on matters of which they should know nothing. If they dine with their parents when there are guests, either they are made to keep preternaturally quiet, which is bad for them in one way, or they are permitted to make a noise, chatter, throw bread-balls, cry, and make themselves altogether insupportable. The mother hates all healthy discipline, and wants her darlings never to leave her apron-

strings. She does everything in her power to prevent them from entering a profession which would oblige them to leave home. The father, too, although less indulgent in some ways, has a rooted objection to his sons going away, and prefers to ruin their careers and spoil all their prospects rather than allow them to do so. While among the poor many emigrate from necessity, among the upper classes most Italian fathers and mothers look upon their sons as unnatural monsters if they wish to go abroad to work or study. A better and more liberal tendency is now growing up amongst the more educated, but there is still a large number of people of culture and intelligence who think that their sons should be for ever at home. This unreasonable and retrograde attitude is probably responsible for more mischief in Italian affairs than half a dozen Adowas, or a deficit of ten million pounds in the Budget.

Children thus grow up with wrong ideas on every subject. They are never boys and girls, only babies or adults. They are kept at home too much, they develop precociously, and at the age of twelve or fourteen they are like little old men and women in their conversation, while they are absolute babies, and continue to be such for years, in all that regards independence and self-reliance. Even if the boys are sent to boarding-schools they are treated there like pupils of a convent school, and learn nothing of life. There is no such thing

as an Italian schoolboy, and no word in the language expresses that idea: he is either a child or a "student" (even at the *gymnasia* and technical schools a boy of ten is called a "student"). He is not allowed to go out alone until he is twelve, and may not travel alone until a much later age. On the other hand, when he is fifteen years old he is taken out to evening parties and dances, and pays formal calls to ladies in fashionable society.

Family affection is very strong and manifests itself in various ways. Among the nobility it often happens that several generations and collateral branches of the same family live under one roof. The head of the house, as we have said, occupies the first floor, the *piano nobile*, or a part of it, and his unmarried sons and daughters and brothers live with him. The other floors are occupied by his married sons and married younger brothers. In some cases the whole family have their meals together, while in others only the unmarried relatives dine at the family board. That this is a very old custom is evinced by the great size of the old palaces, which were evidently built for that purpose. The system adds to the dignity of the family, as it enables them to present a united front to the outer world, but it also tends to foster domestic ructions.

The position of women, like so many other things Italian, varies very greatly from one province to another. The written laws may be uniform throughout the country, but nevertheless

the customs of Lombardy and of Sicily are as different as those of England and Turkey. A woman's property is guaranteed to her by law from any abuse on her husband's part; she has equal rights of inheritance with her brothers if the parents made no will; and there are few points in which her rights are inferior to those of her male relatives. She is the natural guardian of her children after her husband's death, and she enjoys many other privileges. But in the unwritten laws of custom her position is very unequal. If her rights of inheritance are identical with those of the male heirs, the testator usually leaves all the property of which he can dispose by will to his sons—often to the eldest son alone. When a daughter marries she receives a *dote* from her parents, which becomes the property of her husband for so long as the marriage lasts. At her death it goes to her children; if she dies without issue, it reverts to the giver, unless it has been otherwise arranged.

Unmarried women may not go out alone, even if well over forty. A middle-aged spinster has not a very pleasant time of it. She is laughed at far more than she would be in England, and, save in a few very rare cases, she is never taken seriously. She may be strong on woman's rights, on economics, on music or literature, on politics, but she is seldom listened to. A few women of exceptional ability or remarkable character have succeeded in overcoming these disadvantages, and

acquiring considerable influence, but they are very few. However, the new spirit is abroad, and girls are beginning to obtain greater freedom. They may cycle alone, and two girls may go out without an escort, especially in places where there is a large foreign element. But in Southern Italy the position of women is very different, and not unlike that which they enjoy in Mohammedan countries. In some rural districts, when the husband goes out he shuts up his wife in the house until his return. Were he to omit to do so, she would look upon it as a slight. One may know a man intimately for twenty years without ever having seen his wife and daughters.

With regard to education the law makes no difference between the sexes. Classical and technical schools and the universities are open to women, and a certain number avail themselves of these advantages. There are, of course, special colleges for girls, public and private, but those who desire a regular classical or scientific training either go to the ordinary boys' schools, or study at home. At the universities the proportion of girl students is larger than at the schools, as many prefer to go through the school curriculum privately. Medicine, natural science, and literature are the faculties particularly favoured by women. The law faculty has hitherto been practically closed to them, as the bar council refuses to admit them to plead. There are several lady doctors, some of whom have a large practice; other women

have achieved distinction in the fields of literature, scholarship, and science. Nearly all the girl students belong to the *bourgeoisie*. The education of the average woman, such as is given in the regular girls' school or at home, consists of the three "R's," the rudiments of history and geography, cookery, needlework, the elements of religion, and music. Among a certain set of the aristocracy it has been the fashion of late years to go in for higher education, and smart young ladies have their professors of Latin, chemistry, advanced mathematics, and literature. But they usually begin half a dozen subjects at once with enthusiasm, and get tired of them after a few weeks or months, and quietly drop them. Lectures are also very much in vogue, and they serve chiefly as fashionable rendezvous to fill up the hour between luncheon and afternoon calls. Physical exercise is as yet but little indulged in, and Italian women are seldom athletes. But it is beginning to increase among the aristocracy, and some ladies, following the example of Dowager-Queen Margherita, have even taken to Alpine climbing. Riding is a still more favourite amusement.

¶ The great majority of Italian women are as yet quite uneducated. The contrast between men and women in this respect is remarkable. The husband may be a man of learning and education, well read, speaking several languages, a man of the world, a favourite in society; but his wife is

a mere peasant. She speaks no language but her own, never opens a book, save occasionally some devotional work; she has no ideas beyond her children, the kitchen, and the linen closet. There is still among Italians a certain amount of prejudice against highly educated women; even in progressive Milan the ideal of many a man is to have a wife who shall be *Tütt' Ces' e fiö'* (all Church and children). It must be admitted that some learned ladies do make one understand the prejudices against their class. Being very rare and exceptional, they make a point of despising everything that is feminine, assume airs of superiority over other women, and only talk to men, usually on learned matters. The fairly well-educated and well-read middle-class wife who takes an intelligent interest in many things without being very deep, and who is a congenial, intellectual companion to her husband, has yet to be developed.

On the other hand, there is one delightful type of woman of which Italy has many examples. It is the aristocratic lady who is at once a society leader and an intellectual influence. One meets her in the most fashionable and frivolous company, and in that of the learned and intellectual, and she shines equally in both. Her manner is charming and cordial; she takes an interest in all the chief questions of the day; she speaks many languages perfectly, and is well up in the literature of each. She is clever without being pedantic,

full of enthusiasm, intensely patriotic, and determined to do something useful for her country. She is a thorough politician, and knows all the public men of Italy. She is a leading spirit of half a dozen charitable organisations. She writes bright and intelligent articles in the *Nuova Antologia*, and is the friend of literary people. On her estates she is beloved by her *contadini*, and full of schemes for their betterment. At home she is a charming hostess, and in her rooms one meets all the interesting people of the town, as well as most of the notable foreigners who are passing through. With all her varied interests, she finds time to be an excellent mother, and brings up her children far better than many a woman who devotes her whole life to them. She also goes in for physical exercise, travels to foreign countries, and has intimate friends in London, Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Boston. The influence of this class of woman is extremely useful, and makes all for progress, education, and patriotism.

Another type of Italian lady is that of the keen business woman. She has little or no book-learning, and has rarely moved out of her own province. But she is shrewd and capable, and knows how to look after her own and her children's property. She was, perhaps, left a widow, with large but encumbered estates, mortgaged up to the hilt, and she is surrounded by greedy relatives and dishonest bailiffs, who have taken every

advantage of her late husband. She sets to work to introduce improvements, to clear off mortgages, to dismiss thieving *fattori*, and she succeeds. Everything that is done she does herself, and she rules her dependents and her family with a rod of iron. If they are ill she is kind to them, and helps them in many ways; but they must obey her without asking questions. She even decides as to the marriages of her *contadini*, and settles all their affairs for them. Women of this sort are mostly to be found living in the country or in small towns; it is really astonishing how much they achieve, in spite of active hostility and passive resistance.





## CHAPTER VII

### POLITICAL LIFE AND THOUGHT

ITALIAN political institutions are avowedly copied from English models, not directly, but through French versions. They are embodied in a series of laws, of which the basis is the *Statuto Fondamentale*, or constitution, proclaimed by Charles Albert, King of Sardinia, on March 4, 1848. Like all charters based on French lines, it is pedantic and theoretical. In the field of politics, more than in any other, the Latin races' love of abstract ideas, of "eternal and inalienable rights" has full scope. Individual liberty, the inviolability of property and of domicile, freedom of the Press, of speech, and of association are guaranteed. Equal rights and liberties are granted to all citizens. The government of the country is assigned to the King and his Ministers as the executive, and to the Senate and the elective Chamber of Deputies as the legislative power.

The franchise has been regulated by successive "Political and Electoral Laws." Every literate citizen above twenty-one years of age who pays 15s. 10d. in direct taxes, every farmer who pays

£20 a year in rent, and every householder paying an annual rent ranging from £6 to £16 (according to the size of the town in which he lives) has a vote. There is, moreover, a large number of men who have a right to vote on other grounds than the payment of taxes—Government officials, university graduates and those who have passed certain standards in the public schools, veterans of the wars of independence, etc. The proportion of voters to the total population is seven per cent.<sup>1</sup> A considerable number of men are disfranchised on account of illiteracy, and the Papal bull of *Non Expedit* induces many Clericals to abstain from voting. The proportion of registered electors who actually vote is about fifty-eight or sixty per cent.

The position and influence of the Crown is less powerful than in Germany or Austria, and more like what it is in Spain or Belgium. The King has a nominal right to impose his veto on bills sent up to him by Parliament, but he seldom exercises it. He is the head of the Army, of the Navy, and of the civil administration; he chooses his Ministers according to the recommendations of the two Houses. The Monarchy is on the whole popular, although its popularity has been subject to waves of reaction. The late King, although good-natured and brave, was considered too easy-going and lacking in moral stamina to

<sup>1</sup> In England the proportion is 16 per cent, in France 27 per cent, in Germany 20 per cent.



THE KING OPENING PARLIAMENT



make a really strong monarch. The action of the Crown during his reign was of a colourless and undecided character, which considerably weakened its prestige. The present King, it is believed, is made of different stuff. Brought up in a school of almost Spartan discipline, he is abstemious and economical in his habits, hard-working, cultivated, and he has thoroughly devoted himself to mastering all the details of State business. His Court is a model of domestic morality, and in it all ostentatious expenditure has been rigidly curtailed. There is undoubtedly a strong anti-monarchical element among the Socialists, but it is probable that militant hostility to the Crown is limited to a few party leaders and Deputies, and that among the mass even of the Socialist voters, although many are discontented with the present state of affairs generally, the Monarchy is not regarded with actual enmity. There is no doubt that all that is best and most intelligent in Italy is wholly monarchical.

The Prime Minister is, as I have said, chosen by the King in accordance with the Chamber's vote. He is asked to form a Cabinet, which consists of his most prominent supporters in both Houses. The three most important portfolios are those of Foreign Affairs, of the Interior, and of Finance, one of which, usually the first or the second, is held by the Premier himself. The Minister of the Interior is a sort of Home Secretary and President of the Local Government Board

combined, with other functions besides. On him devolves the task of maintaining order, of repressing riots, and of "making" the elections.<sup>1</sup> The police, too, is under his control, and he keeps an eye on the proceedings of all the local bodies. Ministerial salaries are not very high; each Minister receives £1000 a year, but members of the Cabinet have few duties entailing heavy expenditure. They have no official residences, but they are not obliged to entertain. They are provided with private carriages, and private salons on the railways. There have been, and still are, men of ability among Italian Ministers, but a number of them are chosen simply because it is necessary that a particular region should be represented in the Cabinet, so as not to arouse local jealousies. In any case, their tenure of office is too short and too insecure even for a really able statesman to do much good work, and whatever he manages to do, will in all probability be undone by his successor. Moreover, the members of the Cabinet are absolutely overwhelmed with details of which the local authorities are afraid to take the responsibility. A great part of their activity is absorbed in the manipulation of party groups in the Chamber, and in studying parliamentary exigencies. They must be careful not to shower too many favours on one province, and if they offend any particular town, the local Deputy, hitherto a

<sup>1</sup>This function is, of course, not established by law. It is merely a political tradition.

staunch Ministerialist, may turn and rend them. Conscientious Ministers have their work cut out for them, and some have been known to be at their office from 8 A.M. to 7 P.M., and again from 9 P.M. till midnight. Even in his holidays a Minister is not free from bothers. Wherever he goes he is besieged by a host of people who want favours, promotions, increased stipends, exemptions, the redressing of some act of official injustice or petty tyranny. His wife, too, is pestered with requests for "recommendations" to her exalted spouse, for without recommendations nothing can be obtained. If he goes to a provincial town, the Prefect, the Mayor, the head of the *carabinieri*, and the most prominent citizens call on him every day. In the country a wheezy village band plays operatic airs outside his Excellency's windows every evening, alternated with a chorus of children from the elementary schools. Some Cabinet Ministers have been guilty of grave irregularities, if not of actual corruption, but as a rule the fault lies with the system rather than with the men. An able man can achieve little good, while an incapable or dishonest one can do an incalculable amount of harm.

The Senate, or Upper House, is composed of Senators nominated for life by the King on the advice of the Premier, chosen from various classes of citizens according to sections 33 and 34 of the *Statuto*. These include high officers of the Army and Navy, distinguished diplomats and civil

servants, judges, Deputies who have sat in three legislatures, members of the Academy of Science and of the Council of Public Education, and persons who for three years have paid £120 a year in indirect taxes.<sup>1</sup> They must be above forty years of age. The political power of the Senate is not very great; all the more important questions are fought out and decided in the Lower House. But the Senate, owing to the respectability of most of its members and their age, and the fact that, being appointed for life, they have not to bid for votes, has a certain moral influence throughout the country. There is a sort of deep-down feeling among all classes that in a case of serious danger to the nation from the precipitous or revolutionary action of the Lower House, the Senate would be equal to the emergency and would save the country from disaster. A large proportion of the Senators are men of wealth and good social position, and many are distinguished in various spheres of activity.

The Deputies are elected on the franchise described above. Candidates must be thirty years of age. When the Chamber is dissolved the general elections take place in every constituency on the same day (a Sunday). For a candidate to be

<sup>1</sup> "Celebrities" in letters, art, science, or the law were formerly included; but it is now no longer done, as it was found that the system easily led to abuses. Distinguished men of this kind are nominated only if they also belong to one of the other categories.

returned he must poll more than half the votes recorded; if there are several candidates and no one of them polls the requisite number, a second ballot takes place a week later between the two candidates who came out at the head of the list on the first polling day. Electors can petition against a return. It is undoubted that there is a great deal of corruption and illicit pressure in the elections, and that the most dishonest acts are committed to secure the return of some particular candidate. In the first place, the Government has a heavy secret service fund at its disposal, and functions of the Prefects and the police include those of electioneering agents. The Government subsidises newspapers, promises railways and public works to towns and provinces, and other advantages to private individuals, and exercises much influence by means of the *grandi elettori*. In the South, as I have said, the aid of the *Mafia* and of the *Camorra* has been resorted to freely to secure the return of ministerial candidates, and it is this practice which has hitherto prevented the authorities from suppressing those very undesirable institutions. In the second place, there is direct corruption on the part of ambitious candidates, who spend large sums of money in regular bribes. In many constituencies the prices of votes are as well known as those of wheat or milk or petroleum. In the third place, the so-called "popular parties" (Socialists, Radicals, and Republicans) exercise illicit influence of

another kind by terrorising the electors by means of moral violence and threats of boycott, and by securing the election offices for themselves and then discarding numbers of voters on the most ridiculous pretexts. They also secure votes for their party by promising the confiscation of the property of the rich. A direct incentive to corruption of all sorts is the inadequacy of the punishment inflicted even in the most flagrant cases. A constituency is never disfranchised, and it is almost impossible to punish a Deputy guilty of corrupt practices even when the hands of the Government are clean. But it must not be believed that the elections are based entirely on corruption. In many constituencies the candidates returned represent the real choice of the electors, and everything proceeds according to the law. A healthier public opinion, too, is being aroused on this subject, and political jobbery is no longer looked upon as absolutely inevitable.

Political speeches, both in the Chamber and on the platform, would strike an Englishman as somewhat pedantic and verbose. Rhetoric is the fault of Italian oratory, as it is of modern Italian literature. An Italian audience loves abstract ideas; it will listen for hours in rapt attention to the most prolix speakers, and will be worked up to the greatest enthusiasm by men who express beautiful sentiments about the rights of man, human dignity and equality, the glorious past, patriotism, virtue, liberty, filial affection,

family ties, etc. All parties freely indulge in personalities, and opponents are accused by name of the most atrocious crimes. Political trials for libel are very common. So great is the Italian's love of generalities, that even when a really capable statesman is making a speech, he has to frame quite sensible and practical statements in a halo of abstract sentiments and high-sounding, meaningless phrases, as otherwise he will make no impression on his hearers.

The President of the Chamber of Deputies, answering to the Speaker of the British House of Commons, is elected by the House usually on a party vote. His authority is by no means as much respected as is that of his British *confrère*, and when the more unruly members are determined to make a row, he is powerless to stop them. A bill introduced in 1900 to put a curb on obstruction was met by so much of it that it had to be dropped, and a minority of shrieking Socialist maniacs succeeded for a time in making government impossible. New standing orders which empower the President to suspend an unruly member for eight days have now become law,<sup>1</sup> but it is felt that something far more stringent will be necessary if business is to be carried on in the Chamber. There is no limit to the length of speeches, and the most irrelevant subjects may be dealt with with impunity.

<sup>1</sup> This censure has already been applied on one occasion.

For a bill to become law it must receive the approval of both Houses, after due discussion, and a royal decree is issued authorising its execution. In times of danger or urgent necessity government may be carried on by royal decrees, but a bill of indemnity must afterwards be brought before the Chamber. The laws passed by the Italian Parliament are vague in form and incomplete as to details, so that the legislative body delegates to the executive the power of supplementing them by regulations (*regolamenti*). The latter, which are promulgated by decree alone, often considerably alter the original character of the bills.

The great majority of the Deputies belong to the middle class. A certain number are recruited from the aristocracy, a few are wealthy manufacturers and men of business, and two or three are working-men. Two thirds of the members are professional men. A good many are professional politicians, with whom politics are a regular trade, while others are generally known as "telegraphic" Deputies, who only come to Rome when summoned to vote in an important division. Members are not paid, but they enjoy certain other advantages, such as free passes on the railways. Moreover, their position enables them to obtain many favours for themselves and their friends. A barrister who is also a Deputy carries far more weight with a judge than a rival who has not that dignity. This is particularly the case

with Cabinet Ministers, past, present, and future. The system of recommendations and parliamentary influence is one of the worst evils of Italian political life, and it is generally regarded as one of the Deputy's chief duties that he should help his friends and constituents to procure favours, promotions, concessions of contracts, etc., which would not be otherwise obtainable.

Parliamentary politics in Italy are as different as possible from what they are in England. The party system, which was never really suited to the country, has completely broken down, and the old political parties have disappeared. The Chamber was originally divided into the "Right," which was mildly Conservative, and the "Left," which was mildly Liberal. The former was the party which reconstructed Italy from the chaos left by the collapse of the old governments, the party of Cavour, of Ricasoli, of Sella, of La Marmora, of Minghetti. The "Left" was more democratic, in theory, at any rate, and when it came into power it initiated many political reforms of a radical character, but it gave birth to all the worst forms of bribery and corruption, and followed a disastrous financial policy, which brought Italy to the verge of ruin. Gradually, however, the two names of "Right" and "Left" ceased to have any meaning, and politics centred round the figures of two prominent statesmen. Political life became a sort of see-saw, first between Depretis and Cairoli, then between Crispi

and Di Rudini. But at present there is no statesman who commands an extensive and compact following, and the group system has grown up. Every politician of any prominence has a small body of adherents, and political ability consists in so manipulating a number of these bodies as to form a majority. A group may be to-day on the side of the Government and to-morrow with the Opposition. There are no real political principles at stake in the policy of these groups, and the only important question is that of party management.

But within the last few years a new party has come into prominence, which exercises a considerable influence in the Chamber, and has given a different aspect to all political controversy. This party is Socialism. It had its origin in the anarchist and "internationalist" sects of the early seventies, which aimed at the total subversion of society, which they tried to realise by means of assassination and dynamite. But as the "International" declined, many of its adherents accepted the economic theories of Marx and Lassalle regarding property and wealth, and founded Italian Socialism. What gave strength to the movement was the real need for social reform under which the country laboured. With the birth of the new Kingdom, it was hoped that a new era of happiness and universal prosperity was about to dawn on Italy. But it was found that the heritage of centuries of bad governments, of evil political traditions, of wars and revolutions, of unsound

economics, was not to be swept away in a day. Moreover, the statesmen who now governed the country were far too much occupied with parliamentary politics to have time for social reform.

No feature of Italian political life is, in fact, more remarkable than the small real change which a change of government brings about. Cabinets fall, Chambers are dissolved, Ministries are reconstructed, laws are proposed and accepted or rejected, but everything goes on pretty much as it did before. Doctrinaire Liberalism monopolised Italian politics for many years, and the only reforms which met with enthusiastic support in Parliament were extensions of the franchise and other purely political measures. The needs of the lowest classes were consistently disregarded. Consequently, when a party arose which promised to redress the wrongs of the toiling millions, to correct the inequalities of wealth, and to do away with social abuses and political corruption, it was natural that it should find many adherents. The number of Socialists increased very rapidly, and while in 1882 they had but one representative in Parliament, they now have thirty-three. They are the best organised party in the country, and all Socialist voters go to the poll. They have their clubs, their newspapers, their literature, and other means of propaganda, whereas there is no corresponding activity on the part of their opponents. Within the last three or four years they have increased their voting strength in the

Chamber by allying themselves with the Republicans and the Radicals. The three "popular" parties united count nearly a hundred representatives in Parliament. But however strong the case for the Socialists may appear on paper, there are many points in their theory, and, above all, in their practice, with which it is difficult to agree. In the first place, they are uncompromising opponents of the Monarchy, which, in the opinion of all the most respectable and the most intelligent people in Italy, is the strongest bond of national unity, and an absolute necessity. In the second place, a part of them at least propose to achieve their ends by methods which cannot be regarded otherwise than as revolutionary. They are constantly hounding one class against another, the *non-habentes* against the *habentes*, and persuading the ignorant peasant and the underpaid workman that all their wrongs have been caused by robbery on the part of the well-to-do. Their proposal to introduce a system of collective property, whatever its abstract merits, could not be realised without a savage struggle, and a most disastrous disorganisation of the national finances and of private wealth. They propose to confer enormous powers on the Government, thus destroying all that private initiative which is gradually redeeming Italy from her poverty. Moreover, while Socialism has been growing as regards numbers, its character has been transformed. What with alliances with Radicals who are Monarchs, and

Republicans who are by instinct individualists, and with coquetting with Clericals who can hardly be called even Liberal, the party has become very similar to the other parliamentary groups.

Social reform, even with the Socialists, is no longer a question of the first importance, and nothing interests them but party manœuvres, political intrigues and combinations, and Doctrinaire Liberalism. The real reforms are left to the initiative of a few whole-hearted reformers who are either outside Parliament or who are in it, but without political ambitions. Nor is the character of many of the individual members of the Socialist party such as to inspire general confidence. Among its original founders there were men of real enthusiasm, and some of them are sincere to this day; but the bulk of the party is recruited from the discontented, from the educated unemployed, and from those who have everything to gain and nothing to lose, while the leaders are often merely ambitious politicians, who hope to obtain by agitation what they have failed to achieve by ability. But now that the party has increased in numbers its weaknesses have begun to appear. Most significant is the split between the more respectable and pacific section and the more violent and anarchical section. Possibly Italian Socialism will undergo the same transformation as that of Germany, which has ceased to be a revolutionary party, and has turned into a sort of Advanced Liberalism. In any case, it is more than doubtful

if, in its present form at least, it will purify Italian political life, its tendency being to foster class hatred. The best hope lies in the increasing prosperity of the country, and in the spread of education.

Outside of Parliament there is another political party, the strength of which has always been an unknown quantity. It is the Clerical, or Vaticanist, party, and its political platform is the question of the temporal power. The issue, although nominally a religious one, is, in fact, purely political. Among the baptised Catholics, who form the overwhelming majority, a considerable number are more or less avowed free-thinkers, but there is no real division between believers and non-believers. The point of difference is whether the power of the State or that of the Church should be paramount in *temporal* matters. The contention of the Clericals is that the Church of Rome cannot be free and independent unless it has the temporal power. The non-Clericals, on the other hand, declare that with the Law of Guarantees, and other subsequent ecclesiastical laws,<sup>1</sup> the Church is absolutely free to exercise her spiritual mission, as the State does not, and cannot, interfere with her. The Clericals, however, are not satisfied with the Law of Guarantees, and claim the temporal sovereignty of the Papal States for the Pope. The Italian Government, having occupied those provinces, is anathema.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VIII.

The Papal bull of *Non Expedit* expressly forbids all Catholics from voting at political elections, as to do so would be to imply a recognition of the Italian Kingdom, and the Vatican generally does all in its power to make it impossible for an Italian to be a good Catholic and a good patriot at the same time.

To regain the temporal power, the Vatican's first line of policy was to intrigue with foreign governments, especially with France,<sup>1</sup> and this was one of the chief causes of the rivalry between that country and Italy. It was hoped by the Clericals that France, or some other power, could be induced to intervene in Italy, break up the union, and re-establish the States of the Church. Now, however, that Clericalism is on the decline in France, and that the other governments of Europe see in the increase of Clerical influence a danger for their own authority, the Vaticanists have had to seek elsewhere for support. They thought to find it among the lower classes. Many high-minded priests, acting from a sense of duty and humanity, have for some years been doing good work by organising charity, establishing rural banks, and helping the poor generally. The Clerical party made use of their labours to represent themselves as the only true champions of the lower orders against the tyranny of the "Sardinian" Government, and tried to form a

<sup>1</sup>The French connection was especially the work of Cardinal Rampolla.

Christian Democratic party, hitherto without much success. They even coquetted with parliamentary Socialism on the ground of one common aspiration—that of subverting the existing order of things. The authorities of the Roman Curia hoped that by fomenting internal agitation a revolution of an anarchical or Socialist character would break out, that after chaos reaction would follow, and that all the moderate elements would look to the Clericals for leadership.<sup>1</sup> The reason why the Vatican is prepared to go such lengths for the sake of re-establishing its temporal authority is that its hold on all classes is far greater abroad than it is in Italy itself. The larger part of Peter's Pence is provided by foreign Catholics. Were the Pope to become reconciled with the Italian Government without the temporal power, the Clericals fear that he would be regarded abroad as "a chaplain of the House of Savoy," and lose much of his influence among non-Italian Catholics. Thus they are prepared to see their country dismembered by a foreign invader, or a prey to internal revolution, that the Pope may become the sovereign of a state about the size of Montenegro.

The feeling of the mass of the Italian people towards politics is one of indifference. The number of registered voters who do not go to the poll amounts to nearly half the electorate, and of the

<sup>1</sup>The Vatican has recently thrown over the Christian Democrats, as it felt that the movement was getting out of hand.

abstentionists an immense majority do not vote simply because they do not care ; only a small minority abstain on account of the *Non Expedit*. The fiercest struggles in Parliament and the most complicated ministerial crises find but little echo among the people at large. The lower classes regard the Government with a feeling of distrust and suspicion, engendered by former misrule; to them it is merely an instrument for collecting taxes. On the other hand, they believe it capable, were it willing to do so, of redressing all their wrongs. The disorderly scenes in the Chamber of Deputies have made some men doubt the utility of parliamentary institutions. The old doctrinaire belief that liberty is the panacea for all evils, social or political, is giving way before the stern reality of facts. It is dawning on the minds of all intelligent Italians that it is not enough to frame beautiful constitutions, to make excellent laws, to extend the franchise to an ever larger and ever more ignorant electorate. Something further is needed, and that is political education. In Southern Italy it is entirely wanting, and in Northern and Central Italy it exists only to a limited extent; hence it is idle to talk as the Socialists do of regenerating the country by changing the form of government from a monarchy into a republic, or by introducing universal suffrage for both sexes.

On the whole, it may be said that, although indifference to politics is widespread, the majority

of the people are monarchical. With certain classes the affection for the House of Savoy is very strong, and during the reign of the present King this feeling has increased. With regard to Socialism, that party is strongest in the lower middle class and among the working-men of the large towns, and in certain districts among the peasantry. But although many accept its tenets from a feeling of discontent with the generally unsatisfactory state of things, only a small proportion of them are ready to go to the length of actual revolution and confiscation. The strength of the movement outside Parliament has lain hitherto in the apathy and disunion of the non-Socialists. Were the latter to unite and follow a really vigorous and practical line of policy, and deal adequately with social reform, the Socialists would be nowhere, for Italians are individualistic to a fault, and are strongly attached to property.

With regard to the question of the temporal power, the immense majority of the nation is hostile to the Papal claims. In fact, Italians are sometimes almost surprised that the question should continue to excite so much controversy abroad, for they regard it as practically settled. As a matter of fact, it is not really settled, but it is at present a far less urgent problem than many others. In Rome there is still a Clerical coterie which has nothing to do with the Italian Government. It is composed of the higher ecclesiastics, a few Roman noble families, and a certain number

of members of the *bourgeoisie* and of the lower classes. Clerical society is called the "Black" set, in opposition to the "White," or Quirinal set. But the feeling of antagonism is less bitter than it was, and both sides are becoming less intolerant. What keeps the flame of Clericalism still alive in Rome is the influence of the foreign Catholics. In the other Italian towns, where there are no foreign ecclesiastics, its power is practically nil. In the rural districts the priests have influence on the peasantry, and they often use it for political purposes. Thus voters are induced not to go to the polls for political elections ; other Clericals vote as individuals and not as members of the party. In a few municipal councils<sup>1</sup> a Clerical majority has been returned. But the elections are hardly ever run on the question of the temporal power, and the Clerical voters call themselves Christian Democrats. Among the educated classes it is the rarest thing in the world to meet a Clerical. Even among the clergy there are many, including at least two bishops, who do not endorse the Vatican's anti-national policy.

Italian foreign policy does not call for much comment. The Triple Alliance was acquiesced in as a guarantee for peace, and as a protection for Italy, first, because of French hostility, and secondly because, with so exposed a frontier on the northeast, it is considered wise to be on good

<sup>1</sup> The Papal *Non Expedit* does not apply to municipal and provincial elections.

terms with Austria. Now the feeling of hostility to France is diminishing, and some statesmen are in favour of breaking with the Triple Alliance, and joining the Republic. Italy regards England as her natural ally in the Mediterranean, and, perhaps, of all Continental nations, the Italians have shown the least bitterness against England during the South African War, for they feel that a strong England is for them a necessity.

In looking at Italian political life as a whole, it must be admitted that, in spite of all the bribery and corruption, the dishonest ambitions of professional politicians, the incapacity and inefficiency generally exhibited, there has been a real improvement within the last thirty or forty years. The Government of the new State had an inheritance of bad systems from the old ones when it undertook to make of Italy a modern nation. Moreover, when we compare the present conditions of the country with those which obtained in the days of reaction, bigotry, and ignorance that preceded the unification, we cannot but notice a great progress. Wealth is increasing, and with it education. Political education is bound to follow in time. Hitherto Italians have been too much absorbed in the struggle for food to have the time and the energy to grasp higher issues, and to turn their thoughts seriously to the great problems of political progress and regeneration. Now the time has come when they are able to do so, and the results will be seen in the near future.



## CHAPTER VIII

### RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THOUGHT

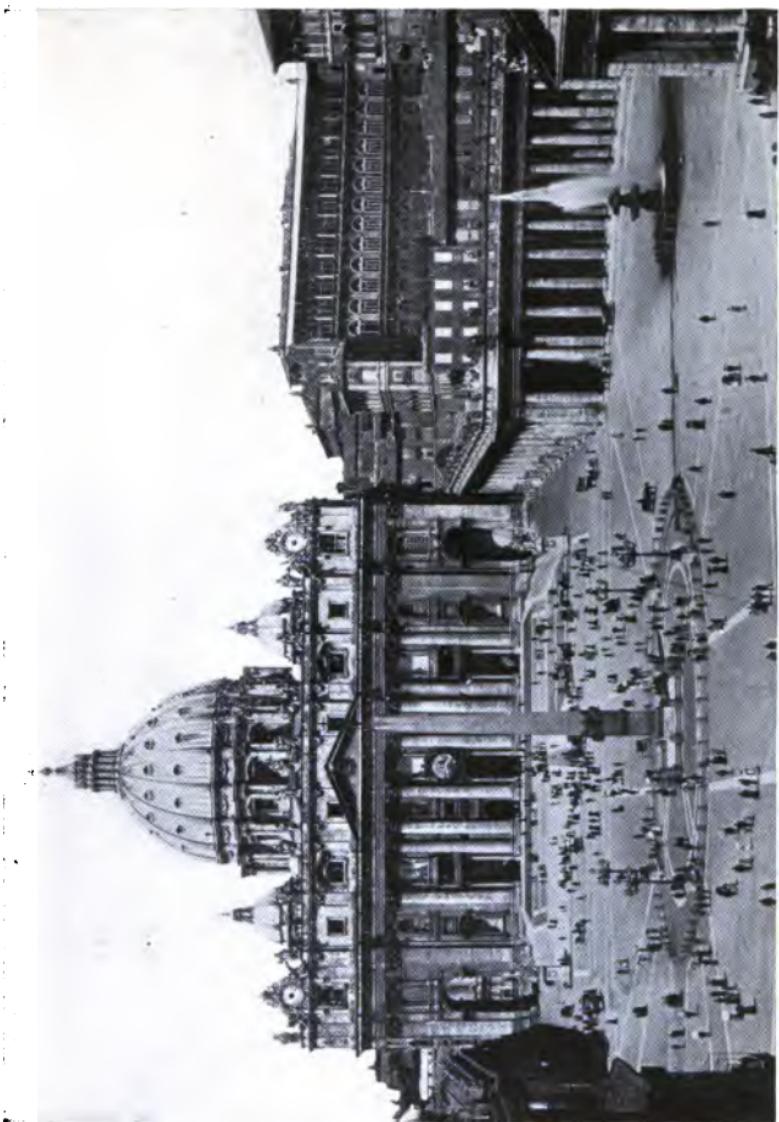
THE religious question in Italy is a peculiarly difficult and complicated one, for in no country is religion so mixed up with politics. In dealing with it, it is necessary to remember, in the first place, that there are practically no sects in Italy, no differences of dogma. The Italian is of an essentially non-theological cast of mind; religious doubts, deviations from orthodoxy, differences of belief, have little interest for him. It may be said that every one is a Catholic in Italy. There are a few score thousand Protestants and a rather larger number of Jews; all the rest are Roman Catholics. Nor is there any struggle between belief and disbelief, for while there are some free-thinkers among the Clericals, there are many devout Catholics among the non-Clericals.

From the point of view of religion, Italians may be divided into four classes. There is a small group of people, consisting of the higher ecclesiastics of the Roman Curia, a certain number of noble Clerical houses in Rome, a large proportion of the episcopate and lower provincial clergy all

over Italy, and a small number of Catholic laymen scattered about here and there. That is the official Clerical party; but its real strength comes, as I have said, from the Catholics of foreign countries. Its aim is the re-establishment of the temporal power, either through foreign invasion or internal revolution and dismemberment. The principle is a purely political one, and has but the slenderest connection with religion. The officials of the Curia (many of whom are foreigners) favour the Papal claims because their realisation would give them a tangible political position and power. The Clerical, or "Black," Roman families remain Clerical because they have been connected with the Vatican for generations, or because they think it is more "swagger." Others adhere to the party for various individual motives. Their total numbers form an infinitesimal minority of the Italian people. We shall deal with the clergy later.

There is another class of Catholics who are absolutely sincere in their religious convictions, and who regularly attend mass and observe all the other religious practices of the Church of Rome, but who have no connection with its political aims. Catholics of this sort are very numerous, although they do not constitute a majority of the population. Many members of the aristocracy are of this way of thinking, and among them one finds some really beautiful examples of religious life. There are people, especially ladies,

ST. PETER'S—ROME.





who devote themselves whole-heartedly to charitable works, impelled by their faith. Their one thought is how to make others happy, and they do their deeds of kindness without any ostentation, but simply because they feel that such is their duty. In the middle and lower classes, too, there are devout Catholics in considerable numbers. But the convictions of people of this type are purely religious. With the political aims of the Vatican they will have nothing to do, or if they are interested in politics they are attached to the Monarchy. It is difficult for a man to be a good Catholic and a good patriot, owing to the uncompromising attitude of the Vatican, which tries to enforce its political creed as an essential dogma of religion; but many do combine the two characters. Among the officers of the Army and the Navy, and in the public services, there are many good Catholics. The Dowager-Queen Margherita, for instance, is intensely religious. The point of view may not be strictly logical, but it is decidedly a practical solution, and some Clericals are gradually admitting its force.

A third class is formed by those who simply believe in the outer miracles and mysteries of the Church, without understanding either its moral aspect or its political ambitions. These are to be found among the lower classes, especially the peasantry, and in the South. They believe simply what the priest tells them; they are superstitious to an inconceivable degree. Some of their

superstitions are of a most degrading nature, and savour far more of fetish-worship than of Christianity. Witness the "miracle" of St. Januarius at Naples, the countless curtseying Madonnas and nodding saints, the loathsome spectacles offered by some of the pilgrimages and "religious" festivals, where men, women, and children may be seen crawling along the ground for hours, licking the dust the whole time, and many other similar manifestations.<sup>1</sup>

The last class, which undoubtedly constitutes the majority of the upper orders and of the people of culture, and probably of the whole population, is that of the free-thinkers. The public services, the bar, the medical profession, the universities, the business world, literature and art, are filled with persons who believe in no religious principles. They do not all profess themselves atheists, but they know nothing and care nothing about religion. Some of them occasionally attend mass, but it is merely an outward observance, and the immense majority of the men never go to church at all. If asked what they think on any point of religious history or belief, they neither affirm nor deny. They simply have never thought about it at all. The cause of this indifference lies partly in the natural tendency of the Italian character towards scepticism, and partly in the politi-

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, the realistic but unpleasant description of the pilgrimage to Casal Bordino in Signor D'Annunzio's *Trionfo della Morte*.

cal nature of the aims of the Catholic Church in Italy. Italians always have been somewhat sceptical, and the Papacy has always been less respected in Italy than abroad, and to-day many are disgusted at the Vatican's interference in political matters. Consequently, while, on the one hand, the Papacy is constantly declaring that the Italian Kingdom is founded on sacrilege, on the other, the Government has practically excluded religion from the schools. As we have seen, the catechism is taught in most of the elementary schools, but these are not attended by the children of the upper classes. In the secondary schools and in the universities, religion has no place. One finds many cultivated university students who are well versed in history, philosophy, and classical mythology, but who know absolutely nothing about the life of Our Lord, or the Reformation, who have barely heard the names of Luther and Calvin, who have never opened a Bible in their lives. Nothing surprises the average Italian more than the great hold which religion has over the most civilised nations of the world. Church-going, as I have said, is usually left to women, but on Sunday mornings, especially in the provincial towns, the Cathedral Church is crowded, and the congregation offers an interesting but hardly an edifying spectacle. Save for a small number of devout believers who are absorbed in prayer, the mass of the people walk up and down, chatter, discuss business or

pleasure, and crack jokes as though they were in the *café* or the theatre. Young men go to church to make eyes at the pretty girls, and flirtations and lovers' meetings are far from uncommon. This may shock foreigners, but when one observes how indifferent even the priests are as they mumble out prayers of which not a word is understood nor even heard, the irreverent attitude of the congregation is not difficult to explain.

What is the character of the Italian clergy themselves? With regard to politics there is, as I have remarked, a division of opinion among them. The ecclesiastics in Rome who form the Vatican *entourage*, the cardinals, and those archbishops and bishops who have reasonable prospects of obtaining a cardinal's hat, are strong upholders of the Papal claims, and consequently hostile to the House of Savoy. The re-establishment of Papal rule in Rome would, in their opinion, give the Church greater independence, and would be more acceptable to ambitious men than their purely spiritual dignity as officers of a universal Church. The majority of them are sincere believers in Catholicism, but their immediate aims are purely political. Some of the younger clergy are enthusiastic Temporalists, either from real belief in the advantages which it would produce for society in general, or merely from hope of preferment.

But there is a very large number of ecclesiastics in all parts of Italy who honestly keep their hands

out of all political matters. To the ordinary parish priests the question of temporal power is of small importance, and, in fact, their position would be in no wise changed were the Pope to rule in Rome. They are all supposed to desire it as part of their creed, but the majority of them do not insist upon it. They are far from professing loyalty to the House of Savoy, for that would get them into trouble; but they do not openly declare themselves its enemies. Every now and again a parish priest makes an insulting allusion to united Italy, but if he does so he risks being punished by the political authorities. The country clergy, who are often little less ignorant than their flocks, hardly ever think of politics, and many of the more educated ones are frequently on good terms both with the local magnates, who are rarely Clericals, and with the authorities. Among the bishops and archbishops, as well as among the lower clergy, are to be found men who combine great piety with patriotism, and who devote themselves to the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the people, and to raising their moral standard. Two eminent ecclesiastics, Monsignori Bonomelli and Scalabrini, have taken up emigration as their particular sphere of activity, and have achieved much for the Italian emigrants abroad. Others have done good work by organising schools, co-operative societies, village banks, etc., while others, again, have devoted themselves to the education of

orphans and children whose parents are criminal and immoral. Nothing can be more noble than the lifelong sacrifice of these truly devout men, often poor and of humble origin, and one can only regret that their labours meet with so little recognition at the Vatican, where politics are the chief interest. Their conduct forms a contrast indeed with that of the Archbishop of Milan, who fled from the city to his villa in the country the moment the May riots of 1898 broke out!

The Italian clergy are in the mass quite uneducated. For the most part they belong to the lowest ranks of society, as the Catholic Church does not shower favours on account of noble birth. There is a certain proportion of gentlemen among them, and many of the cardinals, archbishops, etc., are men of good family, but the overwhelming majority are the sons of peasants or artisans. The average priest knows little beyond reading and writing, and he is often shaky at that. In the Italian Roman Catholic seminaries the teaching is most inadequate, and far inferior to the standards of the public schools. From the point of view of morality, the higher clergy, as a rule, lead pure and austere lives, but the same cannot be said of the rank and file. They are for the most part extremely poor; their work, though sometimes hard, is not constant, and existence in a country parish is terribly monotonous. It is not to be wondered at, then, if many priests lapse from the paths of virtue, from *ennui*, perhaps, as

much as from inborn viciousness. One has but to open an Italian newspaper to read of some scandal in which a priest plays a leading part. The attitude of the ecclesiastical authorities in this respect leaves much to be desired. A priest who is guilty of immoral practices will not receive preferment, but he is by no means always punished, and on many occasions the Government has had to intervene to procure his dismissal. Others, who cannot be accused of actual immorality, fail to fulfil their duties, and take not the least care of the welfare of their flocks.

There is the jolly, good-natured type of priest, who lives comfortably, is on friendly terms with everybody, and thoroughly enjoys a good dinner and a bottle of old wine for the glory of the Lord. He is not troubled with conscientious doubts, nor does he give much thought to things spiritual, but he is kind-hearted, and willing to help such of his flock as may be in want, although he does not attempt to raise their moral standard. The town priest is much more "priestly" in his manner, less inclined to be intimate with any but Clericals, more insinuating, sallow of countenance, and suspicious. He belongs to the "Don Basilio" class. The sporting curate who goes in for lawn-tennis and athletics is not known in Italy. As preachers, the Italian clergy are emotional but not very remarkable, and their sermons are dull, and deal much more with the virtues of relics and the efficacy of prayers to some

particular image than with the religion of daily life. But there are a few really good preachers, who are gifted with great and inspiring eloquence. They usually belong to the religious orders. The congregations do not, as a rule, care much for sermons, but in certain parts of Lombardy and Tuscany the people will listen to them in rapt attention, and complain that they are too short if they last less than an hour.

The priests still have a considerable hold over the lower classes, especially in the rural districts, but they are now much less powerful than they were formerly. Their advice is often sought when a difficult question arises, and usually followed, at least, by the women. In some cases, this is extremely unfortunate, as, for instance, with regard to the question of civil and religious marriage. By telling an ignorant *contadina* that the religious rite is sufficient, they induce her to be married in that form alone, with the result that she is abandoned by her pseudo-husband as soon as he is tired of her, and has no possibility of redress.

A curious feature of the religion of the lower classes in Italy is the belief in the intervention of a saint, or even of the Virgin, in actions of a violent or criminal nature. A brigand who is planning a murder or a highway robbery will pray to his patron saint for success in his schemes. In some of the criminal associations formed among the *Mafiosi* in Sicily, images of saints are intro-

duced as part of the initiation rites. Signor D'Annunzio, in his *San Pantaleone*, gives a powerful and lurid description of a savage fight between the inhabitants of two villages of the Abruzzi, in consequence of a quarrel over the merits of their respective saints. The countless grotesque and degrading superstitions in which so many of the peasants still believe, are in many cases fostered by the priesthood, who hope by that means to retain their hold on the masses, and even the more educated and liberal-minded among them do little actively to combat such beliefs.

The regular clergy, in spite of the suppression of the monasteries, are still very numerous. These, as well as the convents, are found all over the country, and although they do not own as much land as they did formerly, they are still rich. As legally they are not recognised, their property is held in the name of one or two of the monks. The members of religious orders number about forty thousand, or a little over one for every thousand inhabitants. A great deal of unnecessary sympathy has been expended, especially abroad, over their suppression. The monastic establishments have very much changed in character since they were founded. They are no longer seats of learning and study, or of really religious life. Their inmates are, for the most part, men and women of the crassest ignorance, who felt that they had not the courage to face the struggle for

life, and therefore retired to a place where they were at least assured of a bare pittance. Their chief secular occupations, when they have any, consist in tilling the soil around the monastery and making liquors. Some of the nuns embroider, and make sweets and patent medicines. Many orders do not work at all. Monastic life, although the rules vary according to the different orders, is certainly not luxurious, and there is little truth in the tales of corruption and vice which are told regarding monks and nuns. Instances of moral depravity are not unheard of, but they are rare. The food is, perhaps, a little better than that of the peasantry. Fasting is strictly observed, and there is not much to attract the upper classes within the walls of a religious house. Here and there one finds men of good family among them, but very rarely. Women of the upper classes are more inclined to that form of life than men. Some orders go in for the most exaggerated forms of self-denial—a hair shirt, starvation, and living on alms constituting the highest ideal of religion. There are a few orders who devote themselves to teaching. The Scolopi have several well-managed schools, and among the Benedictines of Monte Cassino there are, to this day, men of culture and learning. Others, like the Salesians, have taken up social work, and have proved veritable guardian angels to the navvies employed on the Simplon tunnel. The nuns who act as nurses in the hospitals are often full of zeal, but absolutely lacking

in all the necessary training. Monks and nuns who do deeds of charity such as these, offer admirable examples, but the immense majority of them lead lives which, though not actually harmful, are absolutely void of all utility to the community. There are picturesque objects in the landscape that delight the eye of the artist, or of the English ritualist, but nothing more.

The archbishops and bishops are appointed directly by the Holy See, and the inferior clergy by the archbishops and bishops. A priest receives a benefice from the holder, but subject to the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities. Many benefices, besides the episcopal sees, are in the gift of the Vatican, others in that of the King, others belong to private persons. The relations between Church and State are based on Cavour's principle of *Libera Chiesa in libero Stato*, with a few limitations relating especially to the conferring of benefices. The concordats which curtailed the liberty of the Church in the old Italian States were all abolished by the laws of 1865 and 1866, and the various questions pending were regulated by the Law of Guarantees of 1871, and one or two subsequent enactments.

The Church is absolutely free to exercise her spiritual ministry and to communicate with the episcopate and with the whole Catholic world. The Government does not interfere in any way with the spiritual action of the Pope. His ambassadors to foreign Powers, his special messengers,

and foreign ambassadors to the Vatican enjoy the same privileges as those accorded to envoys of the Italian Government or to ambassadors accredited to the Quirinal. The ecclesiastical authorities may appoint whom they choose to Church benefices. The one power which the Government has reserved to itself is the right to refuse the *Exequatur* and the *Placet*. When a person is appointed by the Vatican to an episcopal see, before he can take possession of the temporal benefice attached to it, he must receive his *Exequatur* from the Minister of Justice. This may be refused in the case of a person who has shown himself actively hostile to the Italian Government, or who is of notoriously evil life. The *Placet* is a similar precaution with regard to priests having a "cure of souls" (who are appointed by the bishops), and is granted or refused by the Public Prosecutor to the Court of Appeal. No benefice in Italy may be conferred on an alien, with the exception of those in the city of Rome and in the *sedi suburbicarie*. These are also exempted from the formality of the *Exequatur* and the *Placet*. In any case the refusal of the *Exequatur* or the *Placet* only affects the temporal emoluments of the benefice. Should a conflict arise on account of the Government having refused the *Exequatur* to a bishop and the Vatican persisted in maintaining him, he could still exercise all his spiritual functions, consecrate priests, and regulate the affairs of his see, but he could not touch the

property attached to it. Certain bishoprics and chaplaincies which were within the gift of the sovereigns of the former States have now passed to the House of Savoy. They are fairly numerous in Apulia, but, as in other benefices, the nominations are subject to the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities. That the limitations imposed by the State are not unduly stretched is proved by the fact that a large proportion of the clergy, especially those of the higher positions, are opposed to the existing order of things, and often flaunt their hostility with impunity. The *Exequatur* and the *Placet*, when once given, may not be withdrawn save by a special Act of Parliament, or in consequence of the condemnation of a priest for an offence expressly punished by the Penal Code, with the loss of the benefice. These offences are excitement to disobedience, or contempt of the law and the authorities, and attacks on the institutions. When an ecclesiastic is thus deprived of his income, it is distributed among a number of poor priests, or devoted to charitable purposes, or to the general Ecclesiastical Fund.

The State exercises a more direct control over the property of the Church. At one time a large part of the land in Italy was in ecclesiastical hands (one third of all Tuscany was owned by the Church). In 1866-67 the monasteries and some other ecclesiastical foundations were dissolved. Their landed property was made over to the State,

which sold it and devoted the proceeds to an ecclesiastical fund (*Fondo per il Culto*). This fund is employed to pay pensions to the members of the suppressed religious institutions, and for other ecclesiastical purposes. If a balance remains over, it goes to the State or to local bodies, together with certain retentions for management and taxes. Parochial and episcopal benefices, cathedral chapters, and seminaries were left in the enjoyment of their property; but the parishes alone may hold real estate. Otherwise the landed property of the Church was taken over and sold by the State, who gave in return an equivalent in Government bonds. A part of this income is deducted for charitable and educational purposes, or to increase the endowment of the Ecclesiastical Fund. The value of the parish benefices amounts to about £1,000,000. Many of the priests are very poor, but their salaries have been raised to a minimum of £36 a year by means of subsidies from the fund. For the bishops, the minimum salary is £240 a year, and the maximum, £1266. There is a proposal to reduce the number of bishoprics and parishes, which are certainly too numerous. Part of the fund goes to give doles to the sixty-six thousand unbefooled clergy and mass-priests, who are, of course, even poorer than their beneficed brethren. The system, on the whole, may be considered fairly satisfactory, in spite of its many defects and imperfections. It is more or less acceptable to all, save to some anti-Clerical

extremists and to the more uncompromising Ultramontanes. Conflicts between the Government and the ecclesiastical authorities are becoming less frequent, and there is less bitterness on both sides. It is not likely that there will be any very startling changes in this matter for the moment, but it is hoped that a better understanding will be arrived at in time.

The other religions in Italy are a negligible quantity. There are Waldensian churches in all the principal towns, and in the district of Torre Pellice, in Piedmont, which is their headquarters, the majority of the population is Protestant. There are also some other reformed sects, such as the Methodists, the Old Catholics, etc. The Italian Protestants are mostly persons of sincere religious convictions and of considerable culture. Many of their ministers are graduates of Edinburgh University. Their doctrines are Calvinistic in character. The Jews are more numerous, but the majority of them are sceptics, only a small number regularly attending the services in the synagogues. They belong almost exclusively to the upper classes. Some of the wealthiest of them are received in the best society, and are regarded quite as members of the aristocracy. They are public-spirited, charitable, and patriotic.

The proselytising spirit is not strong among Italians. Devout Catholics regard non-Catholics and free-thinkers with pious horror, and look upon Protestants as akin to pagans. But with

the exception of a few very "Black" enthusiasts, none object to being on friendly terms with heretics in daily life. Foreign missions have few charms for the Italian mind. Although the *Propaganda Fide* is greatly interested in the conversion of the heathen, the ordinary Catholic, even in the "Blackest" circles, takes little interest in the movement. There are missionary societies for which money is collected, but they excite little enthusiasm. Italian piety runs rather in the direction of contributing to Peter's Pence, of building churches, of having masses said for souls in Purgatory, and of charity.





## CHAPTER IX

### ARMY AND NAVY

THE condition and position of the Army, and the expense it necessitates, constitute for Italy one of the most pressing questions of the day. On the one hand, Italy's great need is for economy, and the cost of the Army—over £10,000,000 per annum—forms no small part in the national expenditure. But, on the other hand, the imperious necessities of national defence must be considered. It is not merely that Italy is aspiring to be a first-class Power; her frontiers are so exposed to powerful and potentially hostile neighbours that a large military force has to be maintained. The Alps have been proved again and again to be no safeguard in themselves. Of course, certain economies might be made, but the number of troops under arms is perilously near the irreducible minimum. The extreme Radicals and Socialists are in favour of substituting a national militia (*la nazione armata*) for the present standing army, but the proposal is, for the moment, outside the range of practical politics.

The Italian army numbers 330,000 men on a

peace footing, and about 3,250,000 on a war footing. There are five arms—infantry, cavalry, artillery, the engineers (*genio*), and the carabiniers. The regiments are distinguished by numbers. The cavalry regiments have special names as well, taken from the places where they were originally formed. Thus there are the Aosta Cavalleria, the Novara Cavalleria, etc. Besides the ordinary regiments, there are some separate bodies of troops for special purposes. The most famous of these are the *Bersaglieri*, or riflemen; they are small, agile soldiers, suitable for skirmishing and scouting, and extremely mobile. On the frontiers there is a corps of Alpine regiments (*Cacciatori Alpini*), which are, perhaps, the finest force in the whole Army. They would form the first line of defence in case of invasion, and are excellent mountaineers as well as "first-class fighting men."

To become an officer in the Italian army, two courses may be followed. The usual way is through the military colleges of Turin, Modena, Pinerolo, etc. Young men remain in these establishments for three years, and, after successfully passing several examinations, receive their commissions. These examinations are not very difficult for the cavalry and infantry, but somewhat harder for the engineers and artillery. Otherwise, commissions may be obtained directly from the ranks by soldiers who are able to pass the necessary examinations. The level of intelligence and culture among the officers is not very high. The cavalry



A VENETIAN GIRL AT WELL.



AN ITALIAN SOLDIER.



is naturally the smartest branch of the service, and its officers are recruited for the most part among the aristocracy. In certain regiments life is rather expensive, although it never reaches the level of many English regiments. The officers do not usually have a regimental mess, but dine together at a restaurant. Sometimes a few may arrange among themselves to have their mess in the barracks, but it is not an officially recognised institution. Cavalry officers are well-mannered, pleasant fellows, and agreeable companions, though by no means highly intellectual. They are fond of sport, and ride splendidly. In many a sleepy provincial town they make themselves very popular by organising races, paper-hunts, and other entertainments, and they are always to the fore in society matters, and are excellent dancers. Infantry officers are recruited from the middle classes, or even from the lower orders. Consequently they do not "move in circles" like their colleagues in the cavalry. When a new cavalry regiment comes to a town, all the officers are at once invited as a matter of course to such social entertainments as may be going on among the nobility. But similar invitations are not extended to the infantry officers. They are not excluded from good society, but to enter it they must be provided with personal letters of introduction. General officers, however, are received wherever they go.

The life of an Italian officer is a somewhat

monotonous one. The older men have seen service in the wars of independence, and a certain proportion of the younger ones have fought in Erythræa, but the greater part have never seen a shot fired in serious warfare, and have spent their whole military career in wandering about from one Italian garrison town to another, from Foggia to Novara, from Novara to Venice, from Venice to Caltanissetta. A few of the more intelligent ones, especially in the artillery and the engineers, devote themselves to study, but the majority have little taste for it. The class from which officers are recruited in all countries is not, as a rule, a highly intellectual one, and military life offers but little inducement to pursuits of a studious nature. Cavalry officers find sufficient occupation in social duties and in sport, but those of the infantry have neither of these resources. Consequently, it is not surprising if they tend to become narrow in mind or frivolous. Many find a solace for their monotonous existence in gambling, and a considerable proportion of the officers are frequently in debt, as is the case in more than one Continental army. They do not fall into the hands of money-lenders to the same extent as their Austrian colleagues, but they are often at loss as to how to pay their weekly bills and gambling debts. The local *circoli* offer opportunities of gambling to officers in all branches of the service, and in the dearth of other amusements they are often made the most of. Even an officer

of studious habits may be for years in a town where there are no libraries and no means of seeing military reviews, so that unless he has a good store of books of his own, which for a poor man is not always possible, he gradually drops into the idle ways of his companions. An officer's pay is about on a level with that of other Government officials. A sub-lieutenant begins on £5 or £6 a month, plus an allowance for his horse if he be in the cavalry. But he can live on his pay if he is as economical as most Italians are inclined to be, and it is chiefly the gambling mania which brings him into difficulties. He has a reduction of seventy-five per cent on his railway fares; but to enjoy this advantage he must travel second-class (until he reaches the rank of captain). Officers under the rank of general must always wear their uniforms, except when on leave.

The rank and file of the army is recruited by means of conscription. Every able-bodied citizen between the ages of twenty and forty is liable to a longer or shorter period of military service. Every year lists are drawn up of all the young men of twenty in each military district ; they are summoned to appear before the recruiting commission (*Consiglio di Leva*). Year by year the War Office fixes the number of men required for the first category, i. e., those who must serve under arms at once. Lots are drawn as to who shall be in the first category, and those who remain beyond the required number pass into the second

category at once. Moreover, there are classes of men who have the right to be placed in the third category—only sons, sons of parents who are over a certain age, sons of widows, etc. The members of the first category must serve under arms for two to three years (according to the branches of the service). They serve for six or seven years more in the regular army on unlimited leave, not under arms; but a certain proportion of them are liable to be called out for a month every year. Then they enter the *milizia mobile*, or reserve force, for three or four years, and, lastly, the *milizia territoriale*<sup>1</sup> (which can only be called out in the case of invasion) for seven years. The members of the second category remain in the regular army for eight or nine years, not under arms, but liable to be called out periodically for a few months' training. Then they enter the *milizia mobile* and the *territoriale* like the others. The members of the third category at once enter the *territoriale*, and so are practically exempted from military service. They may be called out for a month's training every four years, but this very seldom occurs. Emigrants must have fulfilled their obligations (if any) to serve under arms, but may be exempted from the subsequent calls. Young men who have passed through all the standards of the elementary schools, if they pay a fee ranging from £60 to £80, are obliged to serve only for one year, and

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding to the German *Landsturm*.

are treated on a somewhat different footing from the ordinary recruits. University students may defer their period of service until after their twenty-sixth year. The one-year recruits (*volontarii d'un anno*) have to sleep in the barracks; for the first six months they have a dormitory to themselves, but after they have passed an examination they become corporals, and then each one is told off to keep an eye on the discipline of a certain number of ordinary recruits, and must sleep in the same dormitory with them, which is rather an ordeal for a young man brought up to habits of personal cleanliness.

Military service is not looked upon as the privilege of a citizen to defend his country, but rather as an unpleasant necessity. Inasmuch as it obliges a large proportion of the adult males to absent themselves from their work for one or more years, it is an undoubted evil; but it is difficult, in the present state of international politics, to see how it could be avoided. Life in the barracks is by no means an unmixed blessing. The buildings are overcrowded and unsanitary, and the dormitories in most cases are dirty and full of vermin. A bath is permitted once a week, but as several men have to wash in the same water its cleansing properties are seriously impaired. The soldiers suffer intense cold in the winter and great heat in the summer. The rations are deficient both in quantity and quality, although to the half-starved peasants of the South they may well seem ample.

The *volontarii d'un anno* have their lunch in the canteen, which is both bad and dear, but as, like the other soldiers, they are off duty between 6 and 8.30 P.M., they can dine at home. Every now and then they are allowed half a day's or a full day's leave. The officers do not usually ill-treat the men, and are sometimes very considerate, although cases of brutality are not unknown, and many of the non-commissioned officers are extremely rough, and strike and punish the recruits under their command very frequently. There is practically no redress obtainable, as superior officers will rarely listen to complaints from the ranks against the non-coms., so fearful are they of undermining military discipline. The *volontarii* come off worst at the hands of the non-coms., as the latter enjoy committing acts of petty tyranny on those who are socially their superiors. These "volunteers" sometimes remain in the army as officers at the end of their period of military service, but commissions are rarely given to ordinary recruits.

Nevertheless, conscription, apart from the necessities of national defence, offers some very real advantages. The Italian masses need a healthy discipline more than anything else, and the men who have served in the army come back to their homes better set up and in better condition than when they left them. The rough *contadino* from the Abruzzi or from Sicily, who, before undergoing military service, was almost a savage, and

little less ignorant than his own flocks and herds, the moment he dons his uniform becomes a civilised man. He learns to obey orders and to lead a regular life, and is treated for the first time, perhaps, with justice. Even the food, which is repugnant to men of better breeding, to him appears excellent. Moreover, military service helps to weld the union between the different provinces ever more firmly, and to break down the barriers of narrow-minded particularism. A man who as a civilian is a Piedmontese, a Venetian, a Neapolitan, in the army is merely an Italian and a soldier. Illiterate recruits are taught to read and write, and to speak the national language, instead of the local dialects, and all commands are given in pure Italian. Men from many provinces mix in the ranks of the same regiment, and the wild barbarian from Sardinia sees Turin and Rome and Venice, and the *blasé* town-bred youth from Milan and Florence visits the Calabrian and the Sicilian in his home. As an educating force the influence of the Army is very useful.

As an institution, it is, on the whole, popular. Everybody grumbles at the expense it entails, and its organisation is often criticised from a purely military point of view, but the Army itself is rarely attacked. In the first place, it is quite outside politics. It has never become the fetish and watchword of any particular party, it does not constitute a caste, and militarism may be

said not to exist. The officers do not despise civilians in the same brutal way as they do in Germany; they do not insult people in *cafés*, nor make themselves otherwise objectionable. The Army is the one branch of the public service (except the Navy) which is free from corruption. No bribe, however large, however judiciously offered, and no amount of favour in high places can obtain an exemption from military service, or quite undeserved promotion. Among the highest ranks of the Army there may be a certain amount of jobbery in the conferring of appointments, but the ordinary career of an officer cannot be helped by favouritism. Every department of the Government is constantly attacked and abused, and accused of corruption; but the Army has hitherto been admitted to be pure. As an instance of the belief in the honesty and devotion to duty of both officers and men, when General Mirri was in command in Sicily he received numerous letters, from rich and poor, from landlords and peasants, from all parts of the island, praying him to send military officers as Royal Commissaries to different communes. Wherever that was done, and owing to the scandalous maladministration of many municipalities it was often found necessary, corruption disappeared, the *Mafia* lost all power, and for a time there was an honest and capable government. When the troops have had to suppress riots they have done so with the greatest self-control, and the officers themselves

have always been the first to organise relief for the families of those who had been killed or wounded in the struggle. Consequently, even when sent to some place to maintain order, the troops are generally welcomed by the inhabitants —by the same people who a short time before had been rioting against the political or municipal authorities—with cries of *Viva l'Esercito!* For every one feels that they are there to do their duty, and that they will not exceed it. Of late years the Socialists have tried to arouse hatred against the Army among the lower orders, but it is not likely that their campaign will meet with much success.

The annual cost of the Navy is £4,300,000. This sum is by no means too large, considering the importance to Italy of the fleet. The Italian coast-line is so extended and so exposed to hostile attack (far more so than the land frontier) that a large naval force is indispensable, and the present fleet is not really adequate to the task. Naval officers are cultivated and intelligent men. Their intellectual level is far higher than among those of the Army, and they are recruited from a superior social class. There is a larger proportion of men of good family than in the sister service, and the profession is a very favourite one. To enter the navy it is necessary to have passed certain standards at the public schools, and an entrance examination into the Naval Academy at Leghorn. There the cadets undergo a three years' course

under a staff of experienced instructors. The teaching is efficient, but the discipline is of far too monastic a nature, and more like that of a Roman Catholic seminary than of a naval college. However, its bad effects are much reduced by the annual three months' cruise and by the subsequent sea-faring life. Naval officers who travel to all parts of the world cannot long preserve that narrow-mindedness which characterises so many other branches of Italian life. They gain experience of many things, see foreign countries, and knock about among all sorts and conditions of men. The common sailors are recruited from among the sea-faring population in the same way as the army conscripts; but they undergo a longer term of service and receive regular pay.

The ships of the navy are fine, well-built vessels, and a credit to the yards from which they were launched. But, unfortunately, too little money is spent on keeping them up to date, and many battleships and cruisers are kept on the active list which in other navies would have been declared obsolete years before. Moreover, they are not sent on long cruises sufficiently often. A number of them remain in port year after year, with their officers idle on land. The naval manoeuvres occur at long intervals, and are generally very much neglected. The Italian Navy League (constituted on the lines of similar associations in England and Germany) is doing its best to awaken the nation to the necessities of the

fleet, and to its importance for the country's safety. Lectures are given, pamphlets and periodicals published and widely circulated. The conviction is growing, and even the Socialists have not as yet combated it, that more money must be spent on the navy if it is to be of any real use in the event of war.





## CHAPTER X

### THE CIVIL SERVICE

THE Civil Service is divided into three main branches : the Foreign Office, the Central Administration, and the Government Local Administration. Appointments in the Foreign Office are obtained by means of a special competitive examination in law, foreign languages, history, economics, etc. The candidates are for the most part men of good birth and of means, as the career is an expensive one. To enter the diplomatic service, an income of £320 a year is necessary, and no salary is paid for two years. The higher diplomatic officials and the members of the consular service are fairly well paid (for Italy). But the system is not well managed, and promotion is due to a great extent to favouritism. The staff, curiously enough, for a country where officials are so numerous, is woefully undermanned, and in many important capitals there is only a consul-general to do the work of a resident minister, while in others there is only a diplomat and no consul, although the trading in-

terests may be considerable. It is now proposed to create a number of new consulates, especially in the Far East.

The other departments of the public service are crowded with tens of thousands of officials, of whom a large proportion might well be dispensed with. It is estimated that the total number of *impiegati* (exclusive of the officials appointed by local bodies) reaches one hundred thousand. The Government offices are, as we have said, the refuge for a large part of the educated unemployed, but the posts are never enough to satisfy the clamouring hordes. At some competitive examinations there have been as many as twenty-three candidates for every vacancy! The number of appointments is always increasing, and instead of the officials existing for the posts, posts are created for the officials. As there are already so many *impieghi*, it is said, why not create a few more, and make a few more people happy? But in spite of this *impiegomania*, the life of a Government official, either in the Central Administration in Rome, or in the Local Administration dependent on the State, is not a happy one. It is unnecessary to repeat that the salaries are ridiculously low—they start at £48 to £72 per annum, and rise, after thirty or forty years' service, to £300 or £400. Office hours are not very long, nor the work particularly hard, and there are always five men to do work which could be easily managed by one; but things are so arranged

that there is always just enough work to keep each man occupied. Originality and initiative are discouraged, almost forbidden, and the official is made to lose all interest in his work. His salary is so small that, even with an Italian's frugality, he cannot hope to save enough to assure himself of a comfortable old age, and his pension is rarely more than £100 or £150 a year. The whole system is unsatisfactory; it is a combination of the traditions of past Governments, from whom a quantity of officials were taken over *en masse*, with a slavish imitation of French bureaucracy. Some of the higher officials in Rome and in the prefectures are capable and intelligent men and devoted to duty, but the majority are mere pedantic bureaucrats. Promotion is obtained nominally by age and ability, but, as usual, favouritism and "recommendations" have their share. If a man is the friend of a deputy or a senator he can obtain many advantages, while if he has a nodding acquaintance with a cabinet minister, or even with his private secretary, almost any favour is within the range of possibility. Thus the vice-deputy-sub-assistant-Intendente di Finanza at Calatafimi in Sicily may be promoted to the proud position of deputy-sub-assistant-Intendente di Finanza at Modena, and his salary raised from £80 a year to £100. Another man may be transferred from barbarous Sardinia to Milan with all the delights of the Galleria Vittorio Emmanuele, the Café Gam-

brinus, the magnificent railway station, and the electric trams.

Should one have business dealings with an Italian Government office, one will get an idea as to what life in such places is. Externally, the building may be magnificent; possibly it is an old *quattrocento* palace, once the abode of a mighty family; you think what a delightful home for a Government office, and you compare it, much to its advantage, to Whitehall or Downing Street. But the moment you enter, your illusions vanish. Dirty brick floors, whitewashed walls covered with pencil scrawls and figures, absence of carpet and of fire, neglect and squalor everywhere. The windows are broken, the chairs ramshackle and unsteady, reams of stamped paper cover the tables, the pens refuse to write and the blotting-paper to blot, the ink contains mud and sand. The official himself, a little man in spectacles and a rusty black coat, has a somewhat dejected appearance. He is polite, but deadly slow; and as for red tape, you do not know the meaning of the word if you have not seen what it can do in an Italian Government office. If there be the slightest irregularity in your papers, your business may take months and years before it is settled. Even if there is no irregularity, you may be sent on from one office to another without coming to the end of the matter. Finally you will probably have to make a written petition to the Minister of the department in question, and then it will be

returned to you because you forgot to mention your maternal grandmother's maiden name. You must re-write it all over again, and send it back to the Minister; but in the meantime there has been a Cabinet crisis, and there is a new man in office, who knoweth not Joseph, and you have to begin the whole procedure from the beginning once more.

You may meet an *impiegato* in the train if you travel second class. Nearly the whole carriage is occupied by the worthy official, his wife, his two infants, the nurse, and their belongings. The latter consist of a number of miscellaneous parcels of all shapes and sizes and several large boxes, for the family take all they can in the carriage with them, so as to avoid paying for luggage in the van. The wife is a pretty, fairly well dressed, little woman, but with the harried expression of one who is oppressed by household cares and by the difficulty of making both ends meet. The *paterfamilias* will at once begin to talk to you in a friendly way and tell you all his affairs. He was employed in the *Prefettura* at Urbino, and has been transferred to Alessandria. He is very glad to go, as Urbino was an impossible place. *Che paese, che gente!* Why did he dislike Urbino? Surely it is a most beautiful town, full of interesting things! What interesting things? He was there five years, and never saw anything he ever wanted to see again. There are no theatres, no amusements, and the people are barbarians. But

the Duke's palace, the churches, the frescoes, Piero della Francesca, the views of the Apennines, and the Umbrian hills, are they not interesting? Yes, the churches are all very well, and the palace is fine, but the food does not suit his digestion, and there are absolutely no distractions. The pictures are only for the *forestieri*; he sees nothing in them. No, no, he is as happy as possible now that by the grace of God and of the brother of His Excellency's private secretary he is going to Alessandria. Alessandria is a modern town, with beautiful *cafés*, a good theatre, and wide streets; it is on the main line of railway, and quite near to Genoa, Turin, and Milan. He himself is a Genoese, and his wife has a married sister at Alessandria, and a cousin in the *municipio*. What more can one want?

Irregularities of all kinds, as is to be expected, are rife in nearly every branch of the administration, but they usually take the form of illicit pressure, favouritism, and jobbery, rather than of direct bribery, although the latter is by no means unheard of. Guilty officials are not sufficiently punished, and even in the most flagrant cases they always find a number of people to champion their cause and bring forward the "wife and family" argument, and the act of one minister will be rescinded by his successor. A general reform of the system is urgently required, but public opinion has not yet grasped the fact that a poor country like Italy cannot afford the

**luxury of an inefficient and dishonest civil service on American lines, and things are allowed to drift on in the bad old way, with no serious attempt at improvement.**





## CHAPTER XI

### THE AGRICULTURAL POPULATION

ITALY is still mainly an agricultural country, and in spite of the great progress which industry has made within the last few years, the majority of the people are engaged in agricultural pursuits. Hence the necessity that the peasant class should be prosperous and contented. They form the backbone of the country, and are, perhaps, the best element of the population. The Italian peasant is patient, hard-working, kind-hearted, and by no means unintelligent. He may be backward, ignorant, prejudiced, and superstitious, but in laboriousness and in the strength of his family affections he has few equals. Unfortunately, it is this class which has hitherto been the most neglected and oppressed in many parts of Italy, and is the last to feel the relief of generally improving conditions.

Agricultural systems and land tenure vary enormously in the different parts of Italy. The economist, Count Jacini, wrote that "Agricultural Italy reflects all the most important elements which are to be found in rural economy from

Edinburgh and Stockholm to Smyrna and Cadiz." The three main forms of land tenure are the *mezzeria*, the farm, and the hired-labour system. Each of these is subdivided into numerous other systems; each province, each commune almost, has peculiar features of its own. It cannot be said that any one system obtains exclusively in any particular district, for while one is the more generally followed, several others will subsist beside it. Often different parts of the same property are worked on totally different lines. Roughly speaking, however, it may be said that the *mezzeria* is most prevalent in Tuscany and Central Italy, while the other systems obtain more generally in the North and in the South. The *mezzeria*, in its purest and most typical form, as it is in Tuscany, is, briefly, as follows. The estate is divided into a number of fields, or *poderi*, half the produce of which is retained by the peasant who cultivates the soil, and the other half goes to the landlord as rent. The *poderi* vary in size, but are usually of about thirty acres in extent. The peasant's house is on the *podere*, and consists of several rooms, i. e., a large well-kept kitchen, which is also used as a living room, another living room, and a number of bedrooms, according to the size of the family. The cleanliness is not such as would satisfy an English farmer, but there is no filth, and in this respect it is infinitely superior to the peasant dwellings in other parts of Italy, especially in the South. There is a



WASHING ORRIS ROOT IN THE PISTOLESE.



stable for cattle, a shed for fodder, and a vat-house attached to the farm. The household usually consists of the *mezzadro*, or *capoccia*, as the peasant himself is called, his wife, one or two other adults of both sexes, generally relations, and his children, of whom the elder ones help in the farm-work. The *mezzadro* is the head of the little community and its legal representative. His wife, or, if he be unmarried, another female relative, is the *massaja* (housekeeper), and looks after the domestic economy of the farm. Sometimes, when extra labour is required, the *mezzadro* hires a few hands by the day, or, in the case of large *poderi*, he may keep one or two of them permanently. But as a rule the Tuscan farmer objects to using hired labourers, as the work done by them is not so thorough.

The agricultural system is of such a nature that the peasant-farmer has occupations for the whole year. He raises wheat (or other cereals), wine, and oil on the same *podere*. This mixed form of cultivation gives him an astonishing practical knowledge of agricultural conditions and requirements. He knows the character and capabilities of every inch of his *podere*. This piece of soil, he will tell you, is damp; that one is dry; one is exposed to the sun, and good for vineyards; another is sunless; another is best suited for wheat; on another, good grass grows. This spot is suitable for hemp, but it is useless for wheat; that one is good for flax. The amount of intelligent labour

exacted from the Tuscan *contadino* is incredible. Where irrigation is necessary, his fields are covered with a network of ditches and drainage canals; if his land is on the hillside, it is built up into a series of terraces. But all this toil is a labour of love with him, for he considers the *podere* to be almost as much his own property as his master's. Before the vintage he will watch his vineyards the whole night long after his day's work to protect them from thieves.

Besides the regular agricultural labours of the farm, there are other subsidiary occupations. On every farm a certain number of oxen are kept to plough the soil; but besides these the *contadino* often breeds a few calves for the market. He also keeps pigs and poultry, and sometimes silkworms. The women of his family make a little money by spinning, and by plaiting straw; the latter occupation, especially in the Province of Florence, is very usual, and enables a girl to earn from 2*d.* to 6*d.* a day. Other small industries are carried on in certain districts.

The farmer, as I have said, pays half the produce of his *podere* to the landlord as rent, and he also gives him a fixed number of eggs, hams, poultry, etc., while the *massaja* may have to do the washing for the landlord's household. If extra work is required of the *contadino*, he is paid for it by the day. Expenses necessary for regular cultivation are paid for by the farmer (unless it be otherwise agreed), but the landlord must

pay all the extraordinary expenses, such as plants for new plantations, or extensive alterations. The oxen are the joint property of landlord and farmer, and both contribute to their maintenance. As the contract of *mezzeria* imposes a personal obligation, and is based on the physical capacity and moral respectability of the *mezzadro*, the latter may not sublet his holding. The agreement lasts nominally for a year, but it is tacitly renewed, unless one of the contracting parties expressly declares that he wishes it to cease. As a matter of fact, it continues for years, and sometimes for generations, in the same families, and the *mezzadro* enjoys a considerable security of tenure. All the taxes on the land are paid by the landlord. Those on the farmer's personality are paid in advance by the landlord, but he eventually gets paid back by the farmer. When there is a bad harvest the landlord must lend the farmer enough grain to keep him until the next, when his debt will be paid, but without interest. When several *poderi* are close to each other they constitute what is called a *fattoria*, or estate, which is placed under the management of a *fattore*, or bailiff (the same name as *factor* in Scotland). He looks after the *contadini*, keeps the accounts, superintends new cultivations and improvements, and has a direct control over such parts of the estate as are cultivated by means of hired labour. His house, which is called the *fattoria* (like the estate itself), is larger and better than that of the *mezzadri*;

sometimes it is occupied by the landlord when he visits that part of his property, if he has no house of his own on it. There is also a *fattoressa* (usually the *fattore*'s wife), who manages the domestic duties of the estate. As a class, the *fattori* have little education, but they have a very wide practical knowledge of farming. They enjoy the reputation of being thieves, and are supposed to make large fortunes, while their masters are ruined. But, as a matter of fact, they are hard-working, useful servants, and, considering the temptations which fall in their way, fairly honest and conscientious. When a landlord is ruined through his own improvidence or extravagance, the *fattore*, like the cat, is always made to bear the blame. They are, no doubt, narrow-minded, conservative, and opposed to the introduction of improvements and agricultural machinery, as are the peasants themselves. But they are not harsh with the *contadini*, and the landlords find their services indispensable.

The *mezzeria* system has many great and undoubted advantages. Both landlord and farmer are directly interested in the prosperity of the land, not for a time, but permanently. The *mezzadro* works with far more zeal than he would under any other system. The *mezzeria* engenders in him a certain dignity and self-reliance, and he regards himself as part-proprietor of the soil, almost as his master's equal. There is very good feeling between the two, and each respects

the other. If one goes to a Tuscan town on market-day, when the farmers from the neighbourhood come in to sell their produce, in the crowds of peasants with their dark-brown handsome faces, their intelligent expressions, their fairly prosperous appearance, and their stalwart frames one sees the Italian rural classes at their best. Some of the finest qualities of the race are to be found among these tillers of the soil—sobriety, simplicity, natural shrewdness, highly developed family affection, an infinite capacity for hard work in all weathers, courteous and gentlemanly manners. With regard to the actual cultivation of the soil, the Tuscan system combines many of the advantages of large and small farming, of large and small property. As the whole estate belongs to one landlord, he can introduce improvements and try experiments which a small proprietor would be unable to do, but as the land is divided into small holdings, each farmer devotes himself heart and soul to his *podere*. If one crop fails, there are the other two to fall back upon. Consequently, there is little want and little discontent among the peasants, while the landlords, if not rich, are at least better off than their brethren in other parts of Italy, and the land, if properly managed, pays four or five per cent net.

On the other hand, there are certain disadvantages and limitations inherent to this system. In the first place, it cannot be introduced save where

mixed cultivation is possible. Where there is only one crop, land must be held on a different plan. In the second place, the number of peasants who can be kept on a *mezzeria* estate is limited by the number of *poderi*. One or two of the farmer's unmarried sons may find work on his farm, but the others have to go. Consequently, many peasants must be content to do odd jobs as day labourers for small wages and without security of tenure or to go into the towns and become artisans, or to emigrate. Still, the Tuscan *mezzadro* is prudent, and, as a rule, only one male member of each family marries. Again, with this system, if the peasants and *fattori* are hostile to improvements, as the rural classes generally are in all countries, it is difficult for the landlord to introduce them, for he is not absolute master. But this fault can be obviated by means of agricultural education, which is now very much on the increase, even among the peasantry.

The *mezzeria* exists also in Sicily, but there it is so transformed as to be hardly recognisable. In those districts of the island where this system obtains (chiefly in the interior) there is only one crop,—wheat,—so that the peasant is always in need of loans. These are advanced by the landlord, or by a third party, at an exorbitant rate of interest, sometimes as high as fifty per cent. The grain thus provided is of inferior quality, while that which the peasant pays back has to be of the best. Then the landlord has many extra rights

on the peasant's share of the harvest, some of them of a very onerous nature. As that share is often less than the half to begin with,<sup>1</sup> after all the exactions have been satisfied it is reduced to a mere trifle. The peasant has no security of tenure, and may be deprived of his holding on the shortest notice, so that he has no interest in keeping the land in good condition; and as his share is so small he has no incentive to work hard or well. He merely works because he knows that his landlord will not actually let him die of hunger, lest there should be no one to plough the fields.

In Southern Italy and in Sicily the more usual system is that of large estates cultivated by means of hired labour. On the Southern mainland these large properties originally belonged to the Crown or to the communes, and were destined to benefit the peasantry. With the abolition of the feudal system it was decided to sell them to the poorer farmers at a nominal price. But little by little the nobles and rich *bourgeois* obtained possession of these lands, and carved large estates out of them for themselves. Big fortunes were thus built up, not by hard work nor even by plunder, but simply by slightly straining the action of the law; and if most of the Southern landlords are badly off now it is entirely on account of their own extravagance, laziness, and absenteeism. In

<sup>1</sup> If it is one third, it is called *terzeria*; if one quarter, *quarteria*.

Sicily the large estates are of feudal origin, and are still worked on almost feudal lines. The properties are divided into *feudi*, and many are of from twenty-five hundred to eighteen thousand acres in extent. The *feudo* is divided into *tenute* (literally holdings). The landlord, who is a nobleman or rich *bourgeois*, usually lives in town, either in the local centres, such as Palermo, Messina, Catania, etc., or in the large towns of the continent, preferably Rome, Naples, and Florence. He lets his estates to a *gabellotto*, or middleman, by whom he is paid from £1 12s. to £4 per *salma* (equal to 4½ acres). The latter usually sublets it to other *gabellotti*, who in their turn sublet it again. The final division of the property is into *tenute* of eight or ten acres each; these are let to the *borghesi*, who cultivate the soil on contracts of different kinds—*mezzeria*, *terratico*, etc.

The Sicilian *mezzeria* has been described. When the *terratico* contract prevails the peasant pays from two to four and a half bushels of wheat per acre to the *gabellotto*. The systems of cultivation are most primitive. In the interior, wheat is almost the only produce. Travelling through the island one sees vast expanses of brown country and wheat fields with hardly a human habitation or a patch of green. The peasantry live in villages for safety, and go out to their work, which is often miles away, every morning. In the villages there are a few good houses belonging

to the *gabellotti* of the neighbouring estates, while the rest of the population, the wretched *borghesi*, live in the filthiest and most miserable hovels. The *gabellotti* ride about the country armed and well mounted, accompanied by escorts of armed and mounted retainers, called *campieri*, so that they are able to tyrannise over the rest of the population. The landlords themselves, who are mostly absentees, are rarely as harsh as these *gabellotti*. The system of middlemen is indeed one of the worst plagues of the island. The misery and poverty of the Sicilian labourers are almost inconceivable. They are starved, ill-clad, silent men, hating their masters with a sullen hatred which on occasion breaks forth into the most savage outburst of cruelty. Sicilian brigandage owes its origin to the terrible condition of the peasantry, for almost every brigand began his career of crime with the murder of some landlord, *gabellotto*, or other individual against whom he had a private grudge. The *Mafia*, too, although it flourishes in the richest as in the poorest parts of the island, is the outcome of the general lawlessness and misery. As a rule, the greatest poverty is to be found in the interior of Sicily, whereas the inhabitants of the coast are somewhat better off. In the Conca d'Oro (the district round Palermo) there is comparative prosperity, owing to the orange gardens. Here the peasantry, having a little more money, run into the wildest extravagance, and often waste the

fruits of months of toil on a single feast day, in strange contrast to the general frugality of the Italian people.

The large estates of Southern Italy are mostly worked by means of hired labour, or let to small farmers. The regular day labourers are in a very wretched condition indeed, as their wages are deplorably low, their work hard, and their dwellings the merest hovels. But still more miserable are the irregular day labourers, hired for a particular job, not only on account of the lowness of their wage, but also because of the uncertainty of their work. Of late years the lot of all classes of labourers and of the landlords has been rendered still more unfortunate by the ravages of the *mosca olearia*, which has destroyed the olive crops on which alone they depend. On the whole, it may be said that the peasants of Southern Italy and Sicily, with the exception of those in a few favoured districts or on particular estates, are more unfortunate than any other class of Italians, and the successive Governments, who have persistently neglected them, as well as the careless, absentee landlords (with a few admirable exceptions), have a serious indictment to answer.

The predominant agricultural system in Northern Italy is that of the *fitto*, or rent farm. A large property is divided into farms, each of which is let to a tenant for a fixed annual rent, and the farmer engages a number of day labourers to

help him with the work. But a part of the estate is under the direct control of the landlord, and worked by means of hired labour. The peasants are of two classes, as in the South: the regular and the occasional labourers. The former reside on the farm rent free, and receive regular wages by the month or the year, independently of the work executed, paid partly in cash and partly in kind. Each labourer has in addition a plot of kitchen-garden for his own use. The occasional labourers are paid by the day, and hire themselves out to the employer who offers the best wages. They dwell in the villages, and pay rent for their houses. Their condition is not so good as that of the regular labourers, but they are always better off than the corresponding class in the South (where, too, they are more numerous in proportion to the regular labourers). In Piedmont and in Lombardy there is a large number of peasant proprietors who are fairly well off. In the districts dependent on the Po irrigation-canals, the land belongs to a number of large landowners, syndicates, and land-development companies. In parts of Piedmont, especially in the Val d'Aosta, landlords, farmers, and labourers are as prosperous as those of Switzerland or France. In the rice fields of Lombardy and Venetia, however, the condition of the peasantry is still very unsatisfactory, and they suffer from that terrible malady, the pellagra. Wages have risen a little, however, and it is to be hoped that the peasant

class will soon begin to feel the effects of the general increase of wealth throughout Italy.

Criminal statistics among the rural population are high as compared with those of other countries, but inferior to those of the town population. The commoner crimes are murder, deeds of violence, brigandage, robbery, or destruction of agricultural produce, and the mutilation of cattle. Jealousy is the cause of many of the more violent crimes and assaults. Brigandage still prevails in Sicily and Sardinia, and in some districts of the provinces of Rome and Grosseto. It is rare in the South of Italy, and quite unknown in the North, although isolated cases of highway robbery (*grassazioni*) sometimes occur. In Sicily and Sardinia brigandage is quite a recognised institution, and many landlords pay annual blackmail to the principal brigands, which never fails to secure immunity for themselves and their property. Drunkenness is extremely rare among the rural classes, as it is, in fact, in the whole population. There is a certain amount of heavy drinking on Sundays, especially in the provinces of Rome, Perugia, and Verona, but the tipsiness caused by red wine is far less degrading and harmful in its effects than that produced by gin or other spirits.

Italian peasants, like all incompletely educated races, are highly superstitious. Whole libraries have been written on the subject, but it is still far from being exhausted. Among the curious be-

liefs not directly connected with religion the evil eye is the most remarkable; but it is not limited to the rural classes. Ghosts, witches, spells, were-wolves (*lupo mannaro*) play an important part in Italian folk-lore. Many very strange superstitions are connected with the cure of diseases. Thus it is believed in some places that stammering may be cured by keeping a pebble in one's mouth, eye diseases by binding a lock of hair with a thread of cotton, jaundice by eating two or three lice in soup, a cold by sniffing up coal dust, a sore throat by tying a dirty stocking round one's neck. Jumping three times on a skein of boiled twine and rubbing one's self with oil dripping from the framework from which church bells are suspended are considered efficacious for other ailments. The stratum of dirt which accumulates on the unwashed heads of children is believed to be a sure protection against many diseases. I have no space here to enlarge upon these superstitions and folk-lore of the Italian peasantry; some are merely strange and harmless, others absolutely deleterious to the health, while many are of great historical and archæological value.

Of the many rural labours on an Italian farm none is so characteristic as the vintage, and none offers such a picturesque spectacle. On many estates new and improved machinery has been introduced into the manufacture of wine, but on others the old methods are still applied, and there

is little difference between the vintage of to-day and that depicted by Benozzo Gozzoli in the Campo Santo at Pisa. The vintage is a far gayer and more festive occasion than the harvest, and many more quaint traditions and local customs are connected with it. The fact that the wine is made on each estate, is, perhaps, a disadvantage for Italian agriculture, as it hinders scientific improvements and leads to too great a variety of types. But it certainly adds to the charm and picturesqueness of Italian country life. On the first day of the vintage all the peasants of the farm, the hired labourers from outside, and often the landlord himself and his family and guests, go out into the fields carrying numbers of baskets and big shears. The first operation consists in picking the grapes. Large baskets are placed at the end of the vine avenues, while the harvesters fill the small ones with grapes. Then the fruit is transferred to the large ones, which are then removed to the *tinaio* (vat-house). The white grapes, which are first picked, are left to dry in the sun for some weeks, until the juice begins to drop. The sweet dessert wine thus formed is called *vin santo* (holy wine), and is usually the first refreshment offered to guests on arriving at a country house; it is also the last wine drunk at dinner. Then the best black grapes are chosen and left to ferment, and the grapes of second quality are thrown into the vats, which have now been brought to the vineyards, drawn by snow-

white oxen. When the vats are full they are sent back to the vat-house, and the grapes are transferred to still larger, open vats. Twice a day for several days young, bare-legged peasants then stamp on them, and dance about in the huge vessels, singing and chatting. The air is heavy with the fumes of the fermenting grapes, which bubble and seethe as if in a caldron. The first good wine is drawn from the vats and made to ferment again by mixing it with the choice black grapes, which have been exposed to the sun. Subsequently the murk is pitchforked into the wine-press, and the second best wine is drawn. A third quality, called *mezzo vino*, is made from the murk of the former, mixed with water and pressed again. The wine-press is a primitive wooden instrument, worked by means of a screw and wooden slabs. During the vintage the landlord and his peasants are on the best of terms, every one is in a good humour, and wine of the commoner sort is distributed among the poor. There is merrymaking and singing and dancing. At no time is the natural joyousness and amiability of the Italian peasant so conspicuous.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The vintage here described is the Tuscan vintage; other parts of Italy have other local customs, but the operation is essentially the same.





## CHAPTER XII

### THE ARTISAN

IN Italy there is not that absolute distinction between agriculture and industry, between the peasant and the working man of the town, which exists in other countries, notably in Great Britain. In the first place, there are agricultural industries and cottage industries that make the peasant in some sense an artisan. Secondly, there are many important industries, such as mining and quarrying, in which the men employed almost all belong to the agricultural classes, and possess small farms of their own, or work during certain seasons as hired labourers. In the third place, many working men, even in the towns, have little fields or market gardens outside the walls, which they cultivate during off hours. The peasants often come into the towns during the winter to get employment to do odd jobs, while the regular town dwellers sometimes earn money in the country by helping during the harvest, or at other times when there is an extra demand for labour.

In the manufacturing centres of Northern Italy a large industrial population has grown up within

the last fifteen or twenty years which has many of the characteristics of similar classes in other countries. The Italian working men are skilful and intelligent, and the charge of laziness and of incapacity for continued application is no longer justified. There is, however, among them a spirit of restlessness and discontent, which, on more than one occasion, has broken out into open revolt, but which recently has tended to run in the less dangerous channel of peaceful strikes. Socialism finds many adherents among the working men of Lombardy and Piedmont, and its chief strongholds are to be found in the manufacturing districts; and the old spirit of lawlessness is still there. Wages have very much improved, and the conditions of these artisans are far more favourable than those of many other classes of working men and agricultural labourers. The strikes have, in many instances, contributed not a little to their betterment, but it is to be hoped that they will have the good sense to understand that strikes cannot be repeated indefinitely.

In other parts of Italy the dwellers in the towns carry on their trades and avocations on much simpler lines, and everything is done on a smaller scale. Small shops prevail over large ones, and the individual labour of the skilled artisan over the combined labour of many. This is especially the case with the artistic industries, such as the manufacture of majolica and porcelain, carved furniture, bookbinding, metal-ware,

glassware, etc., for which Italy is famed. Those factories succeed best where the individual artisan is allowed to work in his own way, using his own artistic ideas. These trades are run on lines that appear almost mediæval, and although the guilds no longer exist, the spirit which gave them birth survives to this day. The Florentine jewellers and wood-carvers, the glass-workers of Murano, the makers of majolica carry on their occupations much in the same way as their ancestors did four or five hundred years ago. Of the other classes of town artisans, the stone-masons deserve especial praise. Their work, when not jobbed by jerry-builders, is as solid and as excellent as any in Europe, and they are well known out of Italy. Roads, railways, public buildings, restorations of ancient monuments all over the world, are often executed by Italian workmen. The men who come to do jobs in private houses, such as plumbers, painters, smiths, are usually not so satisfactory. They have a tendency to leave their work unfinished, a failing not peculiar to Italians; accuracy, too, is an uncommon virtue. They are almost invariably unpunctual, and seldom execute their orders exactly as they have received them. If you want a room painted in a particular colour, unless you stand over the painters you will find the colour you had originally chosen turned into something quite different. The worst workmen are generally those who assume the greatest airs and call themselves *artisti*.

Two industries of a peculiar nature have of late years come into considerable prominence, owing to the importance of the interests which they represent and the political events to which the conditions of the men employed in them have given rise—the sulphur mines of Sicily and the marble quarries of Carrara. The chief, almost the only, industry of any importance in Sicily is sulphur mining. It gives occupation to a number of men and boys, nearly all of whom belong to the rural classes. But this valuable asset, instead of proving a relief to the poorer peasantry and a source of profit to the landowners, has, owing to a series of unfortunate circumstances, as well as to human shortcomings, produced a class of workers who are among the most miserable and degraded in poverty-stricken Sicily. One of the first causes of this state of things is the fall in the price of sulphur, in consequence of its being no longer indispensable for the manufacture of sulphuric acid. In the second place, the systems of working the mines, save in the cases of a few of the largest and most valuable ones, are of a very primitive nature. This has, of course, made the cost of working them comparatively high, so that few of the mine-owners profit much by their possession. The ordinary miner, or *picconiere*, is fairly well off. His wages average from 1s. 8d. to 2s. 6d. a day. He never works more than six or seven hours a day, or more than five days a week, Monday being usually

a half or a whole holiday. While at work he is exceptionally sober; he eats little, and saves all he can. But on feast-days he squanders his savings in eating and drinking, and in amusements for himself and his family ; he is like the orange-growers of the Conca d'Oro, but even more extravagant. On Sundays he dresses with ostentation, and goes to the theatre, usually occupying the most expensive seats. He is quarrelsome, and ready with his knife and revolver. He is crassly ignorant, often illiterate. He is a confirmed gambler, absolutely wanting in moral sense, and is addicted to every form of vice.

The one cause of discontent among the men of this class is the truck system, and the usurious rate of interest which they have to pay on the money advanced to them (their wages being paid only at the end of the month). It is said that the owners of some of the smaller mines make their sole profit out of the food and other necessities sold to the *picconieri*. Each *picconiere* has under him from two to four *carusi*, and these form the class whose plight is the most terrible of all. The *carusi* are boys of from seven to eighteen or twenty years of age (most of them are eight or nine years old), who go down the shafts to carry the sulphur out of the mines. They have to descend the tortuous passages where the air is fearfully hot and reeks with poisonous sulphur fumes; they are given loads weighing on an average seventy pounds or more, which they have to carry

for distances ranging between one hundred and two hundred yards. As it is very hot in the mines they work stark naked, but they must also carry their loads for some distance in the open air, where in winter the thermometer falls below freezing point. These boys work from seven to eight hours in the mines, or from ten to twelve in the open air, always carrying burdens far above their strength. They walk slow-footed, bent double by the crushing load, moaning, crying, swearing horribly, or invoking the help of the Virgin and the saints. Their wages are a mere trifle. When a miner takes a *caruso* into his employment, he pays a sum of from fifty to three hundred lire to him or to his parents. This is called the *anticipo morto*, and binds the *caruso* to the *picconiere* until it is paid back. The *carusi* find the miners the hardest of task-masters, and are treated by them with great brutality. It is easy to imagine the effect of this mode of life on health and morals. In the mining districts of Sicily the Army Medical Board rejects forty or forty-five per cent of the recruits on account of deformity or ill-health. As I have said, only in a few mines has machinery been introduced; in the majority of cases everything is done by means of this inhuman child-labour. Although the condition of the *carusi* has awakened some attention, nothing has as yet been done to improve matters. Over the entrance of the mines one might well write :

Lasciate ogni speranza, o voi che entrate.

The marble quarries of Carrara, although doubtless a dangerous trade, do not cause anything like the suffering for which the Sicilian *solfatari* are responsible. They are situated in the mountains of the Province of Massa, and are owned by a number of proprietors, the estates varying greatly in size and value. They produce almost the whole of the finer sorts of marble used by sculptors. The quarrymen are strong, well-built men, somewhat careless of their lives, owing to the dangerous nature of their trade, and consequently given to extravagance and turbulence, although to a less degree than in the case of the Sicilian *picconieri*. They, too, belong to the rural classes, and live for the most part in small villages or on farms, and devote part of their time to cultivating a little land. They often have a two-hours' or three-hours' walk to reach the quarries. Their work consists first in blasting the rocks to separate the great blocks of marble from the mountain side. These are then hewn into rough squares and placed on wooden rollers, by means of which they are shifted on to carts. The carts are drawn by means of oxen (four to ten pairs to each cart) and slowly dragged down the mountain to the little harbour near Carrara, whence they are shipped to all parts of the world or to the workshops in the town itself. It is a picturesque sight to see, on the steep road from the quarries to the

sea, the long procession of carts, with their glistening burden of marble drawn by teams of snow-white oxen, the blue Carrara mountains, patched here and there with more marble, in the background, and the deep blue Mediterranean below, while the *caratori*, or drivers, drone forth their curious sing-song cry to urge the beasts onwards. In 1894, when there were disturbances in Sicily, the Carrara quarrymen revolted, formed armed bands which scoured the mountains, and threatened to make a raid on the town of Carrara itself, much to the alarm of the peaceful inhabitants. Martial law was proclaimed, and the province placed under the rule of General Heusch. The insurrection was soon quelled, and the General at once wisely proceeded to remove the causes of discontent so far as lay in his power. It is probable that the men revolted partly from a spirit of adventure and restlessness, and partly also because they were egged on by anarchist agitators; for the Carrara quarrymen are among the best-paid workmen in Italy. During the troubles of 1898, when many parts of Italy were in a state of ferment, martial law was proclaimed throughout Tuscany, with the exception of the province of Massa, where there was not the slightest attempt at rioting. A real improvement in their condition had occurred, and the new Employers' Liability Bill had given them greater security than they had enjoyed before.

An important feature in the life of the Italian

lower classes is emigration. Poverty being so great in many parts of the country, every year a large number of peasants and working men leave their homes to seek for food and employment in other lands. The annual emigration is calculated at about three hundred thousand, and the Italians now living abroad at four or five million. Italian emigrants are of two kinds—temporary and permanent. The former go to various European countries, to Tunis, to Egypt, and to the United States, to earn better wages than they can hope for in Italy, and then return to their native village and buy a little farm or improve such property as they already possess. The permanent emigrants are those who go abroad, for the most part to South America, with the intention of settling there. It is calculated that there are nearly half a million temporary emigrants scattered about Europe. Many of the railways of the Continent, the great Alpine tunnels, the Forth bridge, and other great engineering works were made by Italian hands. Their frugality and industry are indeed marvellous. Although often absent from their families, their love for them is not weakened ; out of wages of 3s. or 4s. a day they always manage to save money to send home. The post-office statistics of places where they are employed bear eloquent testimony to this fact. The men are ready to starve to put something aside for the women and children. Every great city of Europe has its Italian quarter, and when

important public works are being carried out, whole Italian towns will grow up very rapidly. In Tunis, the most prosperous of French colonies, the European population is almost entirely Italian. But the very frugality of the Italian workman causes him to be hated by the native population in European countries; he is dirtier, less educated, content with smaller wages, and he lives in the most squalid way.

But from a political and economical point of view the permanent emigration is the most important. There is not very much emigration of this kind to North America. The Italians in the United States are soon absorbed by the Anglo-Saxon element, with whom, on account of their ignorance and their poverty, they cannot compete successfully. But in South America they are not only very numerous, but they are also the superior race. In Brazil, Uruguay, and the Argentine Republic there are about three million Italians (of whom half are in the latter State); if the sons of Italian parents born in South America are included, the figures are still higher. In Argentina a third of the population is of Italian origin. They are not merely navvies or agricultural labourers; the richest merchants, the biggest contractors and stock-brokers, the most successful barristers, doctors, engineers, and other professional men are Italians. The Italians of Buenos Ayres alone own property valued at £30,000,000, and three fifths of the iron and steel goods

produced in the Republic are the work of Italian firms. The navigation of the coast and the great inland waterways is practically an Italian monopoly. In the rural districts they are almost the only tillers of the soil. Even in politics the Italians are successful ; many Cabinet Ministers and at least one President (Dr. Pellegrini) are of Italian origin. The enormous majority of these prosperous settlers left Italy without a penny in their pockets. One cause of their success is that they find themselves in the midst of an inferior population. The natives have all the indolence of the Spaniards, increased by the pernicious admixture of Indian blood; they will do no manual labour, and few of them have the intelligence necessary for successful brain work.

The condition of the Italian in Brazil is not so satisfactory. The country is in parts very unhealthy, and a large number of emigrants have been induced to go there under false pretences, to be exploited by dishonest emigration agents and brutal mulatto task-masters. But even in Brazil their position is improving, especially in the southern provinces, and much of the business of Rio de Janeiro is in Italian hands.

Emigration was at one time looked upon in Italy as an almost unmixed evil. Italian writers have likened it to suicide, and every Italian who left his own country was regarded as little better than a traitor. But now that the importance of the movement is beginning to be grasped, it is

seen that it is in many ways an advantage. Peasants and slum-dwellers who left Italy in rags return wealthy and build themselves large and commodious houses; the little towns of the Riviera, whence many of the emigrants started, are full of them. Most of the emigrants, both permanent and temporary, send money home to their relatives. It is, indeed, calculated that £8,000,000 are sent to Italy by Italians living abroad. Italian settlers in South America encourage Italian firms to export their goods, and thus give a fillip to all branches of national industry. Italy now exports more goods to the Argentina than any other country except Great Britain. Moreover, emigration has solved the serious problem which the rapid increase of population in Italy presented. Italy needs expansion as much as England or Germany, and in South America she has found an outlet. One of the drawbacks to emigration is that those Italians who go to France, Germany, Switzerland, or the United States to find work, having hitherto been neglected by Italy, end by looking upon their own country as a cruel stepmother, as a land of taxes, military service, and police, and associated with anarchists, so that when they return they prove an element of discontent and rebellion. Of those who go to South America many soon forget that they are Italians, and, owing to the many differences of dialect among them, gradually drop into Spanish as the most useful medium.

But it is by no means the case with all, and the *Società Dante Alighieri* and other associations are doing much to keep up the Italian language and Italian sentiments among the four or five million Italians scattered about the world. A large proportion of those in the Argentine Republic are very Italian in their sentiments, and have done much to increase the prestige of their old country by forming what is beginning to be known as "Greater Italy."





## CHAPTER XIII

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

IN forming a system of local government, Italy has, as usual, followed French example, and, as usual, the system is uniform throughout the country. The local authorities are of two kinds: the local officials appointed by the Central Government and directly dependent on it, and those elected by the municipal and provincial assemblies. Although Italy suffers in many respects from over-centralization, the Government is by no means carried on entirely in Rome, but it has its representatives in every district.

The Government is represented in the provinces by the Prefects, the *Consiglieri Delegati*, and the Councils of Prefecture. Italy is divided into sixty-nine provinces, in each of which there is a Prefect, or Provincial Governor, appointed by the Minister of the Interior. The Prefect is, above all things, a political official, and he is often used by the Government to exercise pressure at election time so as to secure the return of desirable candidates. His interference in the

action of the locally elected bodies is sometimes tyrannical and unwarranted; but, on the other hand, the character of many of the bodies, especially in the South, their dishonesty and wanton extravagance, renders the supervision and intervention of the Prefect, who is an outsider and independent of local *camarillas*, absolutely imperative.

The Prefects are recruited from the upper classes. Some are retired generals or politicians, others are members of the higher civil service, others men of wealth and position; a few have been through the regular departmental career as secretaries, clerks, and councillors in the prefectures. For the most part they are gentlemen and persons of ability, and above suspicion of corruption. Their illicit political action is forced upon them by the system, and the more independent prefects sometimes refuse to interfere in the elections. If a particularly partisan Cabinet happens to be in office, the consequence is that they receive a telegraphic order of recall and are placed in *disponibilità*, i. e., they must wait for another appointment until it suits the powers that be, or until a Cabinet crisis occurs. Or else they may be transferred to some other less desirable prefecture. Often a sort of "general post" takes place between the prefects, and twenty or thirty of these officials change places. Within the last five years there have been no less than 286 *traslochi*. As the representative of the Crown in the

provincial capital, the Prefect enjoys a considerable social position, and has besides his official duties certain ornamental ones not unlike those of the Lord-Lieutenant of an English county. He presides at inaugural ceremonies of all sorts, lays foundation stones, opens museums, congresses, and hospitals, attends all the most important social functions, the funerals of local celebrities, and the unveiling of public monuments. Occasionally, he gives official dinners, receptions, and balls. His salary varies, according to the size and importance of the post, from £300 to £800 a year, but he generally has private means as well. An official residence is also provided for him in the *Prefettura*, furnished somewhat scantily and in an appalling style. But if the *Prefettessa* (as his wife is called) is a woman of taste she covers the official atrocities with her own things, and makes the apartment presentable.

Each province is divided into two or more districts, in which the Government representative is a Sub-Prefect. His duties are very similar to those of the prefects. In the capital of the province there is, of course, no Sub-Prefect, but the Prefect is assisted by the *Consigliere Delegato* and a nominated Council of Prefecture. There is, moreover, a Provincial *Giunta*, composed of two prefectoral councillors and six members elected by the Provincial Council. This *Giunta* acts as a sort of intermediary between the Central Government and the locally elected bodies, and has

several important functions. The locally elected authorities are provincial and communal. In each province, besides the Prefect and the Council, who are more or less dependent on the Ministry of the Interior, there is a Provincial Council elected on a wide suffrage, composed of not less than twenty and not more than sixty members. It deals with all affairs that affect the province as a whole. When the Council is not sitting, business is carried on by the Provincial Deputation elected from among the councillors.

In all the 8262 communes the machinery of government is identical: in the industrial centre of four hundred thousand inhabitants as in the most wretched Calabrian village, in the intelligent and public-spirited communes of Piedmont as in the corrupt, *Mafia*-ridden communes of Sicily; all from an insane love of equality or a fear of awaking local jealousies. The communal authorities are the Syndic, or mayor, and the Communal Council. The latter is composed of from fifteen to eighty members, elected on a wider suffrage than the Deputies, although illiterates and a few others are excluded. The Councillors remain in office for six years, but half of them go out every three years. The Council holds two regular sessions annually, but it may meet more often if there is an emergency, and the Prefect may summon it to decide on some definite question. When the Council is not sitting, the work is done by a communal *Giunta* elected by the Coun-

cil itself. The Council also elects the Syndic. It has many and varied duties. It keeps the streets and municipal roads in order, it exercises a control over the markets, the lighting of the town, the burial grounds, and various sanitary matters. The elementary schools and certain secondary schools are wholly managed by it, and many charities are under its supervision. But besides their compulsory duties, both the communes and the provinces are at liberty to undertake large numbers of other services of public utility, and it is this permissive faculty which opens the door to the more serious abuses, and to reckless extravagance in squandering the ratepayers' money. Many communes, especially in Sicily and in the Neapolitan provinces, throw away large sums in fireworks, illuminations, festivities, centenaries,<sup>1</sup> and bad municipal bands, while there is not enough for necessary purposes. In Palermo a new opera house was built at the expense of the commune, while the hospital was left in a most disgraceful condition, and necessary repairs had to be suspended for want of funds. Other communes are practically run by some local clique or family, who administer them entirely to their own advantage. In one large

<sup>1</sup> Italian towns have a mania for celebrating their local famous men, and are constantly organising festivities, with processions in mediæval costumes, fireworks, speeches, etc., in the name of some worthy of whom no one outside of the town has ever heard.

commune in the province of Benevento, mentioned by Signor Turiello in his book, *Governo e Governati in Italia*, the Syndic was the brother of the local deputy and of the conciliation judge; his uncle, a priest, was the village schoolmaster, and his cousin the communal secretary and collector of taxes. In some Sicilian communes, including several large and important towns, the municipality is entirely in the hands of the *Mafia*, and no business can be carried on without the permission of that estimable association.

The Papal *Non expedit*, as we have said, does not apply to municipal elections, and the Clericals have made every effort to obtain control over the communal councils, in some cases with success. On the other hand, the Socialists have also found a wide field of activity and propaganda in these bodies. When they have succeeded in forming a majority in the council, their administration has, as a rule, been characterised by greater extravagance and incapacity than that of the "Moderates." One Socialist municipality in Romagna spent the ratepayers' money to provide free meals for the pupils of the secondary schools, who nearly all belong to the *bourgeois* class, and not for those of the elementary schools, who are the children of the poor. In a few communes the Socialists have carried on the administration honestly and regularly, but without any attempt at social reform. Socialist syndics and municipal councillors, like their clerical colleagues, give

little proof of their political and social views beyond making insulting speeches.

Every year a large number of these bodies are dissolved by the prefects for corruption, extravagance, illegal proceedings, or for producing administrative chaos. Sometimes they are dissolved for insufficient reasons, or, worse still, for political ones, but in the majority of cases dissolution was inevitable. When the council is dissolved, a Royal Commissary is appointed to carry on the administration until a new council has been elected. He may remain in power for three months, but sometimes the period is prolonged.

Local finance is no less unsatisfactory than local administration. The indebtedness of the communes and provinces amounts to £54,000,000, and their annual expenses to £22,000,000. Some communes own valuable landed property, but others are almost bankrupt, as there is a tendency to meet any fresh necessity which may arise by means of a fresh loan. The communes may raise money by imposing taxes on various forms of wealth, but the three principal taxes are the *octroi* duty on food and drink and certain other articles of consumption when they enter the commune, the tax on land and buildings, and the family tax. The method of levying the local taxes is even more harassing and irritating than in the case of the Government taxes, and there is more petty tyranny and meanness in every way. The

*octroi* duty weighs most heavily on the poor. All the communes save the smallest have the right to impose it. It is enforced by surrounding the town with walls, so that nothing may enter the gates without being inspected by the revenue officials. Every morning at the gates of any large town may be seen trains of country carts waiting for hours for their turn. Nothing is meaner or more degrading than the spectacle of the revenue officials, often ill-mannered and insolent, poking with a sort of glorified knitting-needle into every bundle or cart-load of produce that passes, frequently imposing maddening little fines over and above the regular duty. This performance goes on not only in large towns like Rome or Genoa, where the authorities have to spend heavy sums on the streets, lighting, water, etc., but even in small places like Orvieto, where next to nothing is done for the inhabitants. The family tax, too, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> is levied in a most odious manner.

Thus there are in all no less than eight local authorities, often in conflict, superimposed over each other: the Municipal Council, the Municipal *Giunta*, the Syndic, the Provincial Council, the Provincial Deputation, the Administrative Provincial *Giunta*, the Prefect's Council, and the Prefect. Each superior authority exists with the object of keeping an eye on the inferior ones. It is indeed a case of *quis custodiet custodes?*

<sup>1</sup> Chapter IV.

But even here there is progress, and some of the larger communes of Northern Italy are models of good administration. Municipal life is of enormous importance in Italy, and thousands of people who do not care one jot for parliamentary politics are keenly interested in the affairs of their native place. The *municipio* is everything to them, and all their life and activity revolves round it. One of the best-managed communes in the country is that of Milan. Under the able administration of Signor Vigoni and of a group of zealous and intelligent citizens, many admirable reforms have been carried out. The *dazio consumo*, or *octroi*, has not been totally abolished, but the duties on flour, rice, bread, petroleum, butter, cheese, firing, and various other articles have been taken off, and if they have been maintained to a limited extent on meat, drinkables, forage, and building materials, they are no longer levied at the gates in the exasperating old way, and the *cinta daziaria* has been pulled down. The municipality has insured the lives of all the workmen employed on municipal buildings and other public works. It has entrusted several important contracts to co-operative associations of working men. Water, drains, slaughter-houses, and lighting have been municipalised with excellent results. The electric trams are to a certain extent municipalised and under the supervision of the local authorities. The number of passengers has increased from less than thirty-four

million in 1895 to forty-four million five hundred thousand in 1899. Halfpenny fares have been introduced in the early morning hours for workmen, teachers, and school-children. Large sums have been spent on elementary education, and the communal schools of Milan are among the best in Italy. Grants have also been given for higher and professional education, to the Polytechnic, to the Scientific and Literary Academy (a sort of university), and to the Agricultural College. The town has contributed towards the cost of the Simplon tunnel, and is always generous in matters of charity. Milan has now a Socialist majority in the town council and a Socialist syndic, but all the reforms were carried out by Signor Vigoni's Moderate administration, and since he was turned out, no other useful improvements have been introduced. The example set by Milan is being followed by Bergamo and Bologna, and it is hoped that other communes will do the same.

Among the reforms of a general character in the local administration, one which has been frequently suggested is to abolish the provinces. The whole country should be divided into sixteen large divisions (*regioni*), each of which would be ruled by a governor and a council having wider powers than the present provincial authorities, and able to make different laws and regulations, according to the special needs of each district. Although the proposal has found favour in many

quarters, it has never been seriously discussed in Parliament, owing to the fear of weakening the bonds of national unity. But now that the danger is less pressing, it is probable that a project of this sort will eventually be accepted.

The administration of justice plays an important part in the local life of Italy, for the courts are not centralised in the capital, but scattered all over the country. Like other Government officials, the judges are exceedingly numerous, as there is an immense number of courts of justice. The lowest grade is the Conciliation Court, whose functions include arbitration and civil jurisdiction in cases not exceeding £4 in value. Of these there are 8476—rather more than one for every commune. The next grade is the *Pretura*, a sort of police court, where the most unimportant criminal cases, and civil cases, the value of which ranges from £4 to £60, are tried; there are 1535 *Preture*. Then comes the *Tribunale*, a higher civil and criminal court. The most important criminal cases are tried by jury in the Assize Courts, of which there are seventy-nine. All these courts, excepting, of course, the lowest, hear appeals from the inferior ones. There are in addition twenty-four regular Courts of Appeal (civil and criminal), and above these again, five Courts of Cassation (of which one only—that of Rome—hears criminal appeals). Certain cases dealing with the administration are tried in special courts. In the Conciliation Court and in

the *Pretura* there is only one judge. The prosecutions in the latter are conducted by a barrister specially appointed to the task. In the *Tribunale* there are three judges, in the Assize Court three judges and a jury, and in the Court of Appeal five.

Most criminal cases are prepared beforehand by a *giudice d'istruzione*, who visits the spot where the crime was committed, questions a few witnesses and the prisoner, and collects preliminary information. This questioning of the prisoner constitutes one of the most serious blots on the Italian, or rather Continental, judicial system. The accused is alone with the judge, and unassisted by counsel, and anything which he may drop is used against him at the trial. It is a relic of Inquisitorial procedure.

An Italian law court is divided by a railing into two parts: one for the public, and one for the judges, jury, plaintiff and defendant, witnesses, counsel, and Press. The proceedings are public, and sensational trials are a recognised form of entertainment. A striking speech by an eloquent barrister is applauded as if it were in a theatre. The judges sit on a dais behind a long table covered with green cloth, and wear black robes and black caps, with distinguishing badges in silver or gold. To their right sits the public prosecutor, who wears a somewhat similar attire, and to their left the court clerk. On the wall above is a portrait or bust of the King, with the

words *La Legge è uguale per tutti* (The Law is equal for all). The witnesses are called up before the judges, and sit opposite to them. The prisoners are in an iron cage guarded by *carabinieri*. All questions are addressed to the judge by counsel, and the former, if he thinks fit, may repeat them in turn to the prisoner or witnesses. Consequently, there is no regular cross-examination by the barristers. Contempt of Court is not uncommon, and not severely repressed, everybody being allowed to make long digressions and general statements which have little bearing on the case. Rhetorical speeches and passionate appeals to humanity and human dignity always produce a great impression, and frequently secure the most unaccountable verdicts. The prisoner in criminal trials is presumed to be guilty until he is proved innocent, and is at a disadvantage with regard to his accusers before and during the trial. He may be kept in prison for months, or even years, before being tried, during which he is treated as a convicted criminal. But the moment he really is proved guilty, however heinous his offence may be, nothing but pity is felt for him, and he at once becomes a *poverino* with a wife and family. The punishments which the Italian law inflicts are by no means unduly harsh. There is no capital punishment, and for many serious offences only an absurdly short term of imprisonment is undergone. The severest penalty is imprisonment for life with solitary confinement

for a few years, but it is only inflicted in extreme cases. A large number of criminals are acquitted, but this is not always the fault of the judges. In the first place, trial by jury is an admitted failure; in Sicily, for instance, the jury are easily terrorised by the *Mafia* gangs into giving a verdict of acquittal, even if they themselves do not believe in the prisoner's innocence. Moreover, for the same reason it is extremely difficult for a judge to obtain reliable evidence. That false sense of honour, to which I have already alluded, called *omertà*, makes all Sicilians regard giving evidence against a criminal as an abomination. This feeling, which exists to a certain extent even in other parts of Italy, explains why the judges appear so severe on the prisoner before the verdict, and why they attach so much weight to the evidence of *carabinieri* and police officials: they know that these are the only people they can trust. Italians also have a considerable repugnance against inflicting punishment, and are always ready to find excuses for a criminal. Every diminution of severity is regarded as a sign of juridical progress and of higher civilisation. The consequence is that in recent years the number of crimes has increased rather than diminished.<sup>1</sup> There are certain districts of Sicily and Calabria which may well be called criminal, as criminal instincts are to be found in nearly all the inhabitants. The only

<sup>1</sup> There were 3698 murders in 1890 and 4005 in 1897.

way to deal with cases of this sort is to punish with extreme rigour.

The number of judges and courts of justice seems unnecessarily large, but in this case the want of means of communication is in a measure to blame, and not only the Latin races' love of multiplying offices. Still, one Court of Cassation for the whole of Italy would be quite sufficient, and the other courts could be diminished by means of circuit judges. The present system encourages litigation in a naturally litigious people, and appeals and counter-appeals make up an appalling total. The most trifling cases frequently find their way up to the Court of Cassation before they are done with. The members of the Bench are not chosen from among the leaders of the Bar, but go through a regular official curriculum. When a young man has graduated in law, if he decides on the judicial career he has to undergo a competitive examination; if he is successful, he is appointed *uditore giudiziario* (a sort of clerk apprenticed to the courts), with a salary of £48 to £60 a year, and he rises eventually to the higher grades. A president of the *Tribunale* receives from £120 to £160 a year, and an Appeal judge £320. A man may be twenty years in the service and be receiving no more than £140 a year. Of late years the personal integrity and impartiality of the Italian judges has been often called into question, and certainly implicit trust is not reposed in them. With their meagre

stipends and their temptations, it would be indeed extraordinary if they were all absolutely above suspicion. There have been many judicial scandals from time to time, in which ugly stories of bribery and jobbery have come out. In the first place, the political authorities constantly interfere with the course of justice, and bring pressure to bear on the magistrates, whenever the trial is connected with politics. If the Bench is not subservient to the Government, unpleasant things may happen. A judge cannot be turned out of his office for a political offence, but he may be transferred from Rome or Turin to Caltanissetta or Sassari.

Political trials occur in the following way. A prominent public man, a Ministerial Deputy and local magnate, is accused by an Opposition newspaper of corruption. He is said to have kept gambling-hells, to have expended vast sums in corrupting the electorate in his constituency, to have secured contracts and appointments for his relations and friends. The Deputy in question prosecutes the newspaper for libel. Then the town divides into two camps; there are charges, counter-charges, press polemics, recriminations, insults, duels, and blows. Each party exaggerates the shortcomings of the other, and both try to influence the judges. The latter, on the one hand, are afraid of offending the Government, lest they be transferred to Calabria and their promotion delayed; but, on the other hand, they do

not wish to be on too bad terms with the opposite side, for the next Cabinet crisis may put it into power. Also, if the Government is not sure of its majority, or wishes to take the wind out of its adversaries' sails, it may be disposed to sacrifice the accused politician, and will be far from grateful to the too zealous judges who acquit him. The Bench is thus torn in two, and its decision will depend quite as much on considerations of expediency as upon those of equity.. Cases of this sort occur again and again, and public opinion is now very sceptical as to the independence and impartiality of the Bench. Actual bribery is not so common as it was, but when a judge of the *Tribunale*, with a salary of £150, has to pass sentence in a case involving millions, and both sides try to "get at him," he must indeed be sorely tempted. That so many judges are honest and impartial, does them infinite credit; but one can hardly expect the same purity in men who receive £150 or £200 a year as in men with £5000. The Courts of Cassation are generally believed to be pure and impartial.

The police is divided into several separate branches. There are the *Carabinieri*, who are a military force under the control of the War Office, the *Guardie di Pubblica Sicurezza*, the *Guardie di Città*, and certain other bodies for special purposes. The *Carabinieri* police the country districts, keep order in the law courts, or in any other place where there is danger of the peace

being broken, and carry out the orders of the authorities. They patrol every road in the kingdom day and night, in pairs, some mounted and some on foot. They have done much to make travelling safe in Italy, and are altogether a very fine and efficient body of men. They are armed with carbine, sword, and revolver, and may be recognised by their three-cornered plumed hats and black uniforms with red facings. The story of the heroism and devotion to duty which these men have shown in their lifelong battle against an unseen, savage, and treacherous foe is one of the noblest pages in modern Italian history. If a few districts are still not free from the scourge of brigandage, and criminal statistics are everywhere very high, it is not due to the want of activity on the part of the *Carabinieri*, but rather to the defects of the criminal law and of the judicial system. They are always thoroughly reliable, and rarely behave with that brutality which characterises the police of many Continental countries.

The *Guardie di Pubblica Sicurezza*, who are under the control of the Ministry of the Interior, execute arrests, keep order in the towns, and act as a detective police. Hitherto they have been remarkable for their inefficiency and dishonesty. Two years ago the whole force was overhauled, many of the worst elements were expelled, and new and better ones substituted, and it is hoped that there will now be some improvement. As detectives, the *Guardie di Pubblica Sicurezza* are

quite useless; the same men appear sometimes in mufti and sometimes in uniform, so that they are well known to all the bad characters. Unlike the *Carabinieri*, they are a most unpopular force, hated and despised by all classes. Of the other bodies of police, the *Guardie di Città*, or town police, alone need be mentioned. Their duty is to regulate traffic and to see that the municipal regulations and by-laws are observed. Their efficiency, like their uniforms, varies according to the different communes. In some towns, especially in Milan, they are well organised and useful, but elsewhere they are unmitigated nuisances, and seem to do nothing but impose fines on street hawkers and pedlers, and cause annoyance to people with dogs or bicycles. As they get a percentage of every fine imposed, this is not surprising. Some communes, like that of Siena, for instance, indulge in gorgeous uniforms for their *Guardie*, to make up for their inefficiency in other respects.

Italian prisons are fairly clean and well kept, and the prisoners are not usually ill-treated. There are several classes of prisons for different sorts of offenders. One of the most typical is the *reclusorio* at Volterra, the ancient *mastio*. It is a mediæval castle built on the foundations of a far older Etruscan stronghold, and is now occupied exclusively by murderers who have been condemned to a period of solitary confinement. I was taken all around the battlements a short time

ago by the director, and found it a most interesting institution. Beyond the walls one could see the glittering Mediterranean, the Pisan hills, and the strange volcanic country in which the town is situated. Looking inside, were numbers of little cells down below, each with its narrow courtyard, each containing a murderer. During the term of "cellular" confinement which the prisoner has to undergo, he is absolutely alone and absolutely silent. Even mass is heard in solitude: the prison chapel is divided into cells like boxes at a theatre, so that each prisoner sees no human being but the priest at the altar. A certain amount of work is done by the convicts, but only a few trades can be carried on. No one may be detained for more than seven years in solitary confinement, but it is quite enough. The suffering must be great, although the idea of it certainly does not have the same deterrent effect as capital punishment, for there is always the hope of a pardon, or at least of a shortening of the period of solitude, a hope which is very frequently realised. At the end of this period the criminal is transferred to another prison, where he works in the company of other men, and after a time he has further alleviations.





## CHAPTER XIV

### PUBLIC EDUCATION

SINCE the unification of Italy the subject of education has constantly occupied the attention of successive Governments, and much time has been devoted to it, much money spent on it. But the system built up, in spite of the zeal of a few able men, has hitherto proved far from efficient. In the first place, the usual abstract theories of equality have caused Italian statesmen to make education too cheap. Secondly, the love of uniformity has induced them to apply the same kinds of schools to various districts with different degrees of civilisation. Thirdly, parliamentary politics have had too much influence on educational matters.

The first stage in the educational ladder is the elementary school. In every one of the 8262 communes of the kingdom there has to be one or more communal elementary schools, or private ones which meet certain requirements. There are over fifty thousand communal and nine thousand private schools. There are five standards of elementary education, the first three of which are

obligatory; but parents need not send their children to school if they have them taught privately by a competent person. The law imposes a fine on parents that do not comply with these requirements, but it is practically a dead letter, and the number of illiterates is still very large. It has, however, decreased from fifty-seven per cent in 1871 to thirty-seven per cent in 1896; the proportion varies considerably between one province and another. In parts of Venetia and Lombardy only six per cent of the children of school age are absentees, but in the South the proportion is very great. The decrease of illiteracy is due partly to military service, as all illiterate conscripts learn to read and write while under arms. Religious instruction is not obligatory, and the local authorities need not provide it unless the parents demand it; but, as a matter of fact, in six thousand communes religious history and the catechism are taught by thirty thousand teachers, of whom three thousand are ecclesiastics. There is now less feeling against religious instruction than formerly; it is generally accepted as a matter of course. In a few schools drawing, industrial work, manual labour, and needlework are taught. Signor Baccelli, when Minister of Education, introduced a system of teaching agriculture in some of the rural communes, where a field is attached to each school, so that pupils may learn something about farming. The state of the elementary schools is deplorable in most of the communes.

The buildings are unsanitary and overcrowded, there are few maps or specimens for object lessons, and everything is insufficient. Here and there one finds some really good elementary schools; as, for instance, at Massa, and in some provinces of Northern Italy, but the general level is very low. They cost the communes £3,000,000 per annum, the Government only granting about £85,000.

There are about fifty-two thousand elementary school teachers in all. Their life is a very hard one, and their salaries are miserably inadequate. They vary from £28 to £53 a year for men, and from £22 to £42 for women, according to the size of the commune. But in the rural communes of less than five hundred inhabitants there is no minimum salary. The teachers are educated in special training colleges, and mostly belong to the lower middle class, but many are children of domestic servants, peasants, and artisans. Most of them are honest and high-principled persons, who make every effort, with scanty means, insufficient education, and insufficient ability, to do their duty. Their heartrending poverty and wretchedness is powerfully described in Signor De Amicis's *Romanzo d'un Maestro*.

The secondary schools are of two kinds—classical and technical. The former are divided into *ginnasii* and *licei*. The curriculum in the *ginnasio* lasts five years (from the age of ten or eleven to fifteen or sixteen), that of the *liceo* three years

more. The subjects taught are Italian literature, Latin, Greek, history, geography, mathematics (up to trigonometry), and the elements of natural science and philosophy. Modern languages are almost wholly neglected; a little French is taught in the *ginnasio*, and German may be substituted for Greek in two or three *licei*. At the end of every year there is an examination in the subjects studied. It is both written and oral for Italian, Latin, and (sometimes) Greek; oral only for the other subjects. These examinations are not very difficult, as dictionaries may be used for the written papers, and no translation at sight is required in the *viva voce*. Moreover, all sorts of illicit dodges are freely resorted to to obtain outside assistance, sometimes with success. The hardest subject is the Italian essay. During the school course every pupil is obliged to write two such essays a week, on moral, historical, literary, or patriotic subjects, usually quite above the intelligence of the average schoolboy. The results can only be described as ludicrous. The final examination, called the *licenza liceale*,<sup>1</sup> which is practically the entrance examination to the university, is somewhat stricter than the others, and the written papers, which are uniform for the whole of Italy, are prepared by the Minister of Education.

The technical schools and institutes provide a modern education—modern languages, arithmetic,

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding to the German *Abiturium*.

book-keeping, algebra, and geometry, drawing, history, and geography. The course lasts seven years, with annual examinations, as at the classical schools. Purely technical education is provided by a number of special schools of decorative arts, design, and modelling, commercial education, etc. But the number of their pupils is small, and they do not constitute a regular system. The agricultural, mining, and forest schools have completely failed. The school of sulphur mining in Palermo, for instance, never had more than six pupils; this number declined to two in 1884, and to one in 1886, when the establishment was naturally closed.

The various subjects are not taught badly in all cases, and there are many good teachers in the secondary schools, but the system is radically wrong. The examinations by no means represent the results achieved, and too much orthodoxy is demanded. There are certain set ideas on every subject, from which it is heresy to dissent. Thus a boy is not taught to use his own judgment with regard to the authors studied, but is told that he *must* admire a certain one more than another. Latin is more thoroughly taught than other subjects, and the majority of educated Italians conserve a smattering of it in after life. The teaching of Greek is quite insufficient; it is so loathed by the pupils that not one in a thousand is able to understand even Xenophon a year after leaving school, unless he has actually

devoted himself to the study of classics at the university. The examinations, easy as they generally are, are the cause of much heart-burning. Towards the end of June (they take place in July) fond mothers may be seen waiting in attendance on a professor to recommend their darlings to his tender mercies, and imploring him not to be too severe; they even visit the local Government school inspector, to ask him to use his influence with the stony-hearted examiner in favour of their boys. He is told that the little dears are so timid, that they really know a great deal, and are quite geniuses, but they are so frightened when being examined. In Sicily even more pressing arguments are resorted to, and some schoolmasters are obliged to go about with an escort of *carabinieri* after the examinations! Candidates who are "ploughed" in the July examinations are given another chance in October, when they are re-examined in the subjects in which they had previously failed. If they are "ploughed" again they are set back for a year, and have to repeat the course. When this occurs there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in the family circle, and the unfortunate schoolboy is either abused and tormented for his laziness or treated as a martyr to the unfairness and partiality of the examiners. If the authorities impose severe tests there is at once an outcry against them, in which parents and pupils are at one; a constant agitation is going on in favour

of making the examinations still easier, of suppressing this or that subject, and curtailing the amount of work required. Physical punishment has long been abolished, and the very idea of it is regarded as barbarous. The only forms of chastisement are expulsion or bad marks. The consequence of having a number of bad marks is that the pupil is disqualified for the July examination, and so has one chance the less of passing into the next form. Boys who study at home or at private schools must go up for some of the public examinations if they wish to enter the university; this course is often followed in the case of the children of well-to-do parents.

Physical exercise is very much neglected in the schools. There are gymnastic classes twice a week, and occasional country walks. Such athletic sports as Italians indulge in have no connection whatever with school life.

The Government schools, both classical and technical, are, with few exceptions, day schools. The pupils attend the classes every day only to hear lectures, repeat their lessons, and show their written exercises. No work is actually done in the school itself. School hours are usually from 8 or 9 to 11 or 12 A.M. and from 1 or 2 to 3 or 4 P.M.; two days a week are half holidays. There is only one school term—from the middle of October to the middle of June—but there is a ten-days' holiday at Christmas, a week at Easter, four days for Carnival, and a few odd holidays scattered

about. Attendance is rigorously insisted upon, and a boy who does not answer to the roll-call at the beginning of each lesson must bring a letter from his parents the next time he appears explaining his absence ; otherwise he will not be admitted. Indulgent mothers often allow their boys to absent themselves very frequently, and some boys have even been known to write letters of excuse in their parents' name themselves. But if a boy absents himself too often he may be disqualified from the examinations or turned out of the school. A curious trait of the Italian schoolboy is his feeling towards cribs. They are not regarded with disfavour even by the best boys, and it is not considered in the least dishonourable to use them. If one visits any public library in Italy one invariably sees a certain number of lads between nine and eighteen years of age immersed in study. They are not engaged on a *magnum opus* on Greek roots or on a universal history ; they are merely copying out passages of a crib of the author who is being read in school. A diligent scholar does not make use of them, simply because he thinks he learns more without them or because he does not require their aid ; but he sees nothing wrong in the fact that other boys use them. Even the schoolmasters do not absolutely forbid their use, because they know themselves to be powerless to prevent it. All work is done out of school, and the libraries are open to every one, so that there seems to be no remedy for this evil.

As the public schools are day schools, and there are no school sports, there is but little *esprit de corps* among the pupils. The school is, in fact, looked upon merely as a place for unpleasant work; there is no affection for it, and few lasting friendships are formed in it, as the boys only see each other during lessons. The only "amusement" connected with the school consists in idling about the streets before and after school hours, discussing school or other affairs, occupying the pavement, and disturbing the traffic. This is a necessary consequence of the schools being situated in the heart of the town, and is particularly unfortunate, as it engrafts a bad habit which clings to an immense number of Italians in after-life. There is not much love lost between masters and boys in or out of school, or in after years, and for a man to be on intimate terms with a former teacher is far rarer than it is in England. The schoolmaster is seen only during lesson hours, and nothing is known of his private life. Hence few occasions for intimacy arise. There are some exceptions, and a few school teachers do exercise considerable moral influence over their pupils, the fruits of which last even after the latter have left school. Many schoolmasters are men of ability and zeal, who really try to interest their class in the subject they are teaching, but their task is always a hard one. Their salaries are meagre: they range from £40 to £150 a year, plus any trifle they may earn by means of private lessons.

They often have to spend years in some part of Italy which is a foreign country to them, among unsympathetic and unfriendly people, and far away from libraries. But in spite of these disadvantages they do some good work, and would doubtless do more if they were given the opportunity.

Secondary education is not absolutely free, but the fees are very low, ranging from £4 to £6 annually, and even from these a boy of exceptional diligence who can prove that his parents are unable to pay them may be exempted. The idea which inspired this system was to have *la carrière ouverte aux talents*, another disastrous result of doctrinaire democracy. The consequence is that the schools, especially the classical ones, are filled with boys whose home training is such that they are incapable of assimilating what they are taught. A boy who in his family circle hears no talk save of the most trivial details of daily life, and who never sees a book in the house, can hardly be expected to acquire a love for study unless he be of exceptional ability. Even if he does learn the school curriculum fairly well, he has no substratum of intellectuality on which to base it. It was also hoped that by making secondary education accessible to all, a fusion of the different classes would follow. But the consequence has been that only a small number of aristocratic families send their children to the public school; the majority prefer to give them a purely home

education, while those that do send their sons to the *ginnasii* and *licei* take good care that they shall not mix too freely with boys of lower social status. In most of the public schools there are a few boys of good family, but they keep pretty much to themselves, and do not make friends with others. The private secondary schools can seldom compete with the public ones. Fees have to be paid, the education provided is usually inferior, and their pupils are at a disadvantage in the public examinations. A large proportion of them (together with a few State schools) take boarders. Their great defect is that their boys, even when seventeen or eighteen years old, are treated like little girls. They may never go out alone, they are taken out for walks in procession, two and two, they may not even go home on Sundays unless a relative of proved respectability comes to fetch them. Even the Government naval and military colleges are run on these lines. If in the day schools there is too little supervision over the pupils, in the boarding schools there is far too much. These latter are mostly under the management of religious orders, and are impregnated with the worst traditions of theocratic rule. It is not surprising that few parents should wish to send their boys to them.

Italy is endowed with twenty-one universities. Of these, seventeen are under the direct control of the Government, while four are the so-called free universities; there are in addition the College

of Superior Studies at Florence and the Milan Academy, and certain schools have university classes attached to them. The universities arose when Italy was divided into separate states, and each princeling wished his own capital to become a centre of learning. Their number is now far in excess of the requirements of the population; but the Government has never had the courage to suppress even the most unimportant ones, for fear of offending local susceptibilities. The university of Ferrara had only seventy-nine students in 1895-96, and Camerino only eighty-five. Their existence is a useless expense. The total number of students is about twenty-three thousand, or seventy-four per one hundred thousand inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> But while the number of universities is large, the teaching is uniform in all of them, and if the reputation of the smaller colleges is inferior to that of the larger and more famous ones, the value of a degree conferred by each is absolutely identical. The aspirant to university honours must first present a certificate that he has passed his final school examinations, and pay his entrance fee (which may be remitted in the case of very poor students). The total fees range from £18 to £34 for the whole university career, but are paid in separate instalments. Then the student writes his name down for one of the faculties and for a certain number of courses.

<sup>1</sup> In France and Germany it is only 60 and 53 per 100,000.

After that, at the beginning of November, he attends the lectures—or he does not. At the end of every school year there are examinations (in two sessions), and a final examination in some particular subject chosen by the student at the end of the last year of the course. There are four faculties: classics and philosophy, law, medicine, and mathematics and science. A student who is inscribed in the legal faculty must take up eighteen subjects, but he may distribute them as he pleases through his four-years' curriculum. The subjects are mostly of a theoretical nature; some are studied two years, others only one. During the year he takes notes of the lectures, or borrows somebody else's notes, and reads them up during the last month or six weeks before the examination. He then sends in his university book to the professors of the subjects in which he wishes to be examined, for them to sign a certificate of attendance. If he has been an habitual absentee, some particularly hard-hearted professor may refuse his signature, and the student cannot be examined in that subject until the following year; but such cases are very rare. The examinations are exclusively *viv<sup>a</sup> voce*, and in the majority of cases extremely easy, as no student is questioned save on the matters dealt with in the lectures. No extra reading is necessary; a student who learns his notes by heart is sure to pass with full marks. Very seldom is a student "ploughed" at a university examination. In

the engineering and mathematical courses the examiners are more severe, and to a certain extent those of the faculty of *belles-lettres*, but in a general way a few weeks' cramming at the end of the term is sufficient to satisfy even the most exacting professors. There are three examiners for each examination—the professor of the subject, another professor, and an outsider; the examination lasts half an hour.

When the student has reached the end of his fourth year (his sixth if he is in the medical faculty), he hands in his written thesis, which is an essay on some question directly connected with his studies, preferably of a controversial character. It is read by the chief examiner and by one or two other professors. If the student has passed all his other examinations, a day is appointed on which his thesis will be discussed. On that day eleven examiners meet in the principal hall of the university, and the candidate is called up before them. He appears in a frock coat, and for an hour discusses his work, answers any objections and criticisms which may be offered, and, if required, elucidates obscure points. Then he withdraws, and the august consistory weigh all the *pros* and *cons* relative to the candidate's merit, and decide what marks shall be assigned to his thesis. If it is approved the candidate is recalled, and the degree of doctor (*laurea*) conferred on him. Outside his companions are waiting anxiously to hear the verdict, and if it is favourable

they congratulate him, the beadle gives him a bouquet and receives a tip, and the new doctor goes home to rest on his laurels. He sends visiting cards to all his friends to announce his new status in life. If the thesis should be appallingly bad or bear palpable signs of having been written by somebody else, it may be rejected. But such an occurrence is even rarer than for a student to be "ploughed" at one of the ordinary examinations. If it does take place it is spoken of in hushed whispers as though it were some fearful omen, portending ruin and disaster.

The ties between the students and the university are of the loosest, the supervision over study is nil, and the discipline is utterly inadequate. The rector and the academic council are supposed to be responsible for its maintenance, but they have no means of enforcing it. The students' riots have become quite a feature of Italian university life, and not a year passes without them. If a professor is too severe in the examinations, too strict in exacting attendance, or is otherwise unpopular, riots are apt to break out. Sometimes they occur without any apparent cause. The root of the evil lies in the examination system itself. As the candidates are only questioned on that part of each subject dealt with in the lectures, if there are riots during the term and the university is closed in consequence, there are so many lectures the less to read up. The student is not satisfied with not attending the lectures

himself, but he must get all the others to do so as well, so as to break up the class. The rector is powerless to put a stop to the shindy. If he calls in the police there is at once an outcry that the freedom of study is violated, the Minister of Education is attacked in the Chamber, and Socialist Deputies hold up their hands in horror at the reactionary methods of the authorities. The upshot of the matter is that the university is closed for a time, and the students get a fortnight's holiday. This excellent result makes them even more disorderly, and when riots break out in one university the students of the others follow suit out of "solidarity." The one punishment which can be inflicted is to suspend the ringleaders for a year. But this can only be done by the Minister of Education. If he resorts to this measure every influence is brought to bear on him to prevent the decree being carried out. Fathers implore, mothers weep, the local Deputy threatens to join the Opposition, friends and relatives write letters, and worry the unfortunate statesman out of his life, until a pardon is extorted. Or if he holds firm, the next Cabinet crisis ousts him from power, and his successor acquires popularity by rescinding the decree.

There is little real university life; the students live separately. More than half of them live with their families, and lead a purely home life. Occasionally there are students' festivals, charity entertainments, theatricals. At the beginning

of the year the *festa dei matricolini* is held, in which all the freshmen are admitted into the company of the older men, and there is eating and drinking, singing, smoking, and speechmaking. The chief amusements of the students are walking about the town, dropping into the *cafés*, and rioting.

Among the university professors there are men of great ability, and some of European reputation. A certain number are politicians of high standing, while others do useful work of a social nature. But their efficiency as teachers is hampered by the stereotyped curriculum, which discourages individuality, and by the baleful influence of the Ministry of Education, which restricts their activity and undermines their authority with the students. The salaries, according to English ideas, are small, but they do not compare unfavourably with those of other Italian Government officials. The maximum is £320 a year, but a professor's duties are not very onerous. He gives three lectures a week, and occasionally advises his more diligent pupils on the course of studies they should pursue; he has six months' holiday. The professors of the medical and legal faculties are often professional men who earn private incomes. A great deal of intelligent work is done by Italian university professors, especially in Greek philology, economics, history, international law, and bacteriology. On the other hand, a great many neglect their duties, deliver

the same set of lectures year after year, take no trouble to interest their hearers, and are frequently absentees, offering the worst possible example to the students. They enjoy a considerable immunity, and can only be turned out (if "ordinary" professors) for the most flagrant misconduct and after repeated admonitions.

Relations between professors and students are of a much more cordial and intimate nature than is the case in the schools, and constitute one of the most agreeable features of Italian university life. Some professors thus exercise a considerable influence in the university, and are regarded by their pupils as real friends.

The whole system of secondary and university education is under the control of the Ministry of Education. Many of the lower secondary schools and a few of the universities are maintained at the expense of the communes, but the Ministry of Education regulates the studies, fixes the scholastic programmes, supervises the discipline (such as it is), controls the appointments of teachers, and in some cases gives out the examination papers. All initiative on the part of the school authorities is destroyed, while the Minister is so overwhelmed with petty details as to the state of the desks in the lyceum at Foggia, or the unsuitable accommodation for the porter at the technical school at Udine, that he has little time to think of wide schemes of reform. One unfortunate Minister received a wire from the head of a *gin-*

*nasio* in the South asking him if a candidate for an examination who had injured his right hand might dictate his essay and translations. A few weeks later the same official was asked to advise the head-mistress of a Government boarding-school for girls whether the washing should be done at home or not. With every new Minister of Education (and there have been thirty-four since 1860) a change of regulations and of the course of study takes place. There is no time for real reforms, but one subject is substituted for another, written papers are introduced for mathematics and suppressed in Greek, the standard of marks is changed—for six months. Then comes a Cabinet crisis, and the new Minister reverts to the old plan or introduces some fresh novelty, to be rescinded in its turn by his successor.

A consequence of cheap higher education is the vast and ever-increasing army of the educated unemployed (called *spostati*). Every year a large number of graduates in law, medicine, *belles-lettres*, and science are turned out into the world to enter a profession in which there is no room for them. Their education has unfitted them for useful work without enabling them to succeed in the liberal professions. Men who in England would go into business or emigrate to America or the Colonies, in Italy become lawyers without clients, doctors without patients, journalists and *littérateurs* without readers, professors without pupils. Some succeed in getting a little work by

underselling abler men, thus lowering the already low professional incomes; others lead idle and vicious lives for a time, and drift into socialism and anarchism in Northern Italy, or into the *Mafia* and the *Camorra* in the South. But a large number try to obtain that panacea for all ills—Government employment. *Impiegomania* is a recognised disease in Italy, and a young man who can obtain an appointment in a Government office, where he has little work and a salary of £48 or £60 a year, thinks himself at the height of earthly bliss. Government employment is the Holy Grail of three quarters of the university graduates. The most miserably paid *impiegato* or the most unsuccessful professional man regards himself as superior to the most prosperous tradesman or skilled mechanic. In the South this feeling is peculiarly strong; but in the North there is some slight improvement, and the development of business is, as we have seen, attracting a certain proportion of the youth of the country. But if substantial progress is to be made, the system of education must be thoroughly reformed, the classical schools and universities made better and more expensive, technical education rendered more thorough and efficient, examinations more difficult, the discipline stricter, and all schools must become educational establishments, and not merely teaching agencies.



## CHAPTER XV

### AMUSEMENTS OF THE PEOPLE

THE favourite and most important pastime of the Italian people is the theatre. Not a town but has its theatre, where for a long or a short season performances are given. The towns of any size have several; even Siena, with a population of barely thirty thousand, has three. In no nation is the love of the theatre so deeply ingrained. For the Italians it is not a luxury, but a necessity. Even those who have been to Paris and London and Bayreuth, and have seen all the stars of Europe, will attend the performances of a small provincial theatre every night. The theatre is not looked upon as an educational influence, as it is in Germany; it is purely an amusement. The performances may be operas, operettas, or plays. Opera is performed in all theatres very generally. Where there is no regular opera house, a few operatic performances are given each year by one of the numerous touring companies. At Milan, Bologna, Rome, Turin, and Naples there are fine large theatres, with all the most recent stage appliances, and the level of

execution is a high one. Milan and Bologna especially as musical centres are comparable with Dresden or Munich, and the taste of the audiences is refined. But elsewhere opera is rather a poor show. Sometimes there is one star with a company of fifth-rate singers ; sometimes there are only the fifth-rate singers without the star. The theatres, too, are dingy, ill lighted and uncomfortable, the orchestra and chorus unspeakably bad. Nevertheless, a town considers itself *déclassé* if it cannot arrange to have at least half a dozen performances of some old stager like *La Traviata*, and as many of *Lucia*, in the year. The best modern operas, including Wagner's works, are only heard, of course, in the chief towns, but the old operas of Donizetti, Bellini, Rossini, and many of Verdi's early ones may be heard all over Italy. Scenery and costume are a very weak point in all save the very best theatres. The chorus in *Lucia di Lammermoor* wear kilts round their armpits reaching down to their waists, with the sporran behind, trunk hose, and pink tights. In the *Traviata* the heroine is attired in the latest Paris fashion, Alfredo and his father are in Louis XIV. costume, the chorus in the banqueting scene in a sort of Queen Elizabeth Renaissance style with ruffs, while the maid in the dying scene is neatly dressed in black, with a white cap and apron which would not disgrace a Bayswater household. The favourite operas are known by heart by every one, and on arriving at an Italian town you can



FLAG-WAVING.



generally tell which one is being performed by listening to the people singing and whistling in the streets. The words of the *libretti* are almost classical quotations, and are put to use on every occasion. Enthusiastic opera-goers even name their children after their favourite operatic heroes.

The general standard of excellence in the drama is much higher than in the opera. Small touring provincial companies which perform at Parma, at Potenza, at Rimini, act remarkably well, without ranting or screaming, but with the utmost simplicity. There is always life and movement, and the actors all play up to each other admirably. There are hardly any first-rate tragic actors, now that Signor Salvini has left the stage, but for ordinary plays there is a large number of excellent performers. As in the opera, there is next to nothing in the way of scenic display or elaborate costumes; everything depends on the acting. The *répertoire* of each company is enormous. There are no six-hundred-night runs of the same play, but a successful piece will be performed five or six times, and be revived a month or two later, acted in turn by different companies. There are hardly any permanent companies attached to a particular theatre, but they all go on tour from town to town, rarely stopping more than a month in each place, and giving a different play almost every night. This is done on account of the regular subscribers, who take season-tickets for all the performances and demand variety for their

money. The favourite pieces are usually translations from the French, especially those of Sardou and Dumas. These are acted year after year, and never seem to pall, however stupid and dull they may be. They are badly translated into a language which is a jumble of French phrases and expressions turned into Italian words. Among the native play-writers there are many of real merit, but the public has got so accustomed to French pieces that Italian authors encounter a stiff competition. The best modern writers are Signor Giacosa and Signor Rovetta. The former is the author of many good plays; his masterpiece is *Come le Foglie*. It is the story of the adventures and troubles of a once rich family brought to ruin through the collapse of an industrial speculation. The weak character of the lazy and fashionable son who cannot stick to work, the frivolous, extravagant wife, the hard-working father who is driven to distraction by them, and whose only consolation is his proud and high-minded daughter, and the noble and intelligent nephew who, despised by his relatives, is their saviour in the end, are drawn with masterly skill and originality. The play is thoroughly imbued with the modern spirit, and is a keen study of human nature. Signor Rovetta is the author of many excellent plays, of which the best is perhaps *Principio di Secolo*, an historical piece, dealing with the murder of Count Prina and the Milan revolt in the first year of the nineteenth

century. It is to be hoped that the works of these writers will in time supersede Dumas's trashy productions and Sardou's melodramas. Among other translated plays, some really good French works are also performed, and several by English and German writers. Pinero and Sudermann are becoming popular, and a few of Ibsen's plays are seen on the Italian stage.

A characteristic type of play is the dialect comedy. The principal dialects have each a theatrical *répertoire* of their own, and the chief town where a particular dialect is spoken has a theatre devoted to those plays. There is a large number of capital pieces both in Venetian and in Milanese, and they are usually very well acted. The former are, of course, inherited from the Goldonian traditions, and Goldoni's own works, of which many are in dialect, still keep the stage. The modern dialect plays are mostly farcical, and extremely humorous they are. For any one who understands even a little Venetian, *In Pretura* or *I Fastidi de un grand' omo*, acted by the Zago-Privato company, will prove irresistible. So will also the performances of Signor Ferravilla in Milanese. The jokes are often rather broad, but the pieces are genuine comedy. Another sort of dialect play is the mask comedy. Many Italian towns have their local masks, characters wearing a fantastic costume, but representing the virtues and vices which are supposed to be peculiar to each locality. As a rule, these plays are serious melodramas,

modern or historical, in which the mask plays a low comedy part. Thus in Florence there is the Stenterello theatre, in which sensational plays such as *Ginevra degli Amieri* or *Torquemada colle sue Settantamila Vittime* (Torquemada with his seventy thousand victims) are acted with Stenterello as a servant, a grave-digger, a soldier, or a retainer, providing "comic relief" to heartrending situations. Sometimes we see Stenterello, who is a good-natured, easy-going, Florentine, in circumstances of great difficulty. Through some misunderstanding, he is taken for the Prefect, or a Cabinet Minister, or an Oriental despot, and has to play up to the part, although in terror of his life the whole time. But by good nature and stupidity he always manages to muddle through somehow. There are two or three actors who make really good Stenterelli and keep the house in a constant roar of laughter, but the fun, as in the Milanese plays, is somewhat vulgar and indecent.

Italian theatres have one great merit. They are usually very cheap. One can see a good play well acted for 2s. 6d. for a stall, and hear an opera for 4s. or 5s. To enter the theatre one must always pay a preliminary entrance fee, which varies from 10d. at the play to 2s. 6d. or 4s. at the great opera houses. Besides that, one pays for one's seats. The stalls are of two kinds: the *poltrone*, which occupy the first five or six rows and cost from 1s. 8d. to 8s., and the *posti distinti*,

or *posti numerati*, behind, which cost from 10*d.* to 4*s.* On very special occasions, however, such as first nights at the opera, gala performances, or when a great foreign star is to be heard, the prices go up with a bound, and one may have to pay as much as £1 or more for a stall. There is no dress circle, as the boxes occupy all the rest of the theatre. These, as we have said, often belong to private individuals, clubs, or public bodies. In almost every theatre in Italy there is a royal box, and sometimes two or three. There is a grand royal box in the middle of the second tier, which is only used on gala nights, and a small stage box on the left-hand side for ordinary occasions. In one or two Roman theatres the different ministries have boxes of their own. Boxes vary a great deal in price, from 3*s. 2d.* in small provincial theatres to £6 or £8 for a gala night at the Scala. A gala performance is a very pretty sight, as all the ladies wear their smartest frocks and their best jewels, and there is a brilliant show of uniforms. The whole theatre is cleaned and brightened up, and lighted entirely by candles. It is usually a feature of every kind of public festivity — a royal visit, an exhibition, a congress, a religious or patriotic celebration, or a centenary.

Italians are excessively fond of shows and spectacles of all sorts, and indulge in them on the slightest provocation. Some are religious festivals, others patriotic and national, but in reality they are all more or less amusements.

Some of them are extremely interesting, and mark a curious link between the present and the remote past. The Sienese *Palio*, for instance, shows how much mediævalism still remains in the Italian character. This festival is so curious that it deserves more than a passing mention. Twice a year, on the 2d of July and on the 15th of August, the sleepy old town of Siena wakes up to new life, the streets are filled with excited crowds, and the beautiful Piazza del Campo is gaily decorated with flags and bunting. For in that *piazza* a race is run which is unlike any other race in any part of the world. The town is divided into seventeen wards, each of which has its own inner life, its own traditions and customs. They are named from animals: *l'Oca* (the goose), *la Chiocciola* (the snail), *l'Aquila* (the eagle); or from natural objects: *l'Onda* (the wave), *la Selva* (the forest), etc. The ambition of each of these wards or *contrade* is to win the *Palio*, which is a sacred banner, and hang it up in the ward's church. These races are run twice a year, and ten out of the seventeen wards are chosen to take part in them. The race-course in the big *piazza* is the strangest imaginable. It is a semi-circular enclosure, much lower on the straight side than on the curved one, with two sharp corners; a more unsuitable place for horse-racing is difficult to conceive. Before the race a solemn procession, composed of the representatives of all the wards in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century costumes,

FESTIVAL OF PIEDI GROTTA.





marches round the *piazza*, with standards, cars, men in armour, on horseback, and on foot, and bands. Then the horses, ridden bare-backed, are brought to the starting point on the upper side of the *piazza*, abreast of a rope drawn taut across the course. At a given signal the rope drops and the ten horses start off. The riders are armed with heavy whips for striking each other and each other's horses, so as to prevent a rival from making too much progress, and blows are dealt unsparingly. At the corners there are almost invariably one or two falls, but the Sienese declare that no one ever died from a *Palio* accident. The people become wildly excited, and shriek out cries of encouragement or hostility as the horses rush past, and the victor has to be protected by the police, both from his friends, who would smother him with their embraces, and from the members of rival *contrade*, who would like to "go for him." The festival originally was a religious celebration, and the *Palio* bears an image of the Virgin, but it has gradually become a question of rivalry between the different wards. This rivalry is so keen and so living that it gives one a very good idea of the local jealousies between one mediæval town and another, or between the different factions in each. Nothing makes one realise the mediæval elements in Italy more than the *Palio* of Siena.

In other towns, too, similar relics of the past exist, in the shape of processions, religious plays, etc. A curious festival is that of the *Misteri* at

Campobasso in Southern Italy, which takes place on the feast of the Corpus Domini. Twelve wooden platforms, on each of which a religious mystery is represented, are carried round the town in procession, up the steepest and most tortuous streets. Young men and girls in suitable costumes are on the platforms, supported on iron frameworks. Some are so placed as to appear suspended in mid-air. One of these *tableaux vivants* represents the miracle of St. Isidore, who caused a stream of water to flow in the midst of the arid desert to quench his master's thirst. Another is the Assumption of the Virgin. The discomfort endured by the actors in this singular display, tightly bound as they are with cords and iron bands so that they cannot move a muscle, and carried about for hours in the blazing sun, must be appalling. A festival of a similar description, which takes place at Gubbio in May, is that of the *Ceri*. A number of heavy wooden erections painted in bright colours and covered with flowers and images of saints are carried up and down the streets at full speed by bodies of men. When two of the *Ceri* meet they are made to bow to each other solemnly. Again, at Grassisina, there is a sort of Passion Play on the hillside on Good Friday. All these festivals are more or less religious functions, but they please the masses by appealing to their love of a show and of the stage. When one of them takes place it is usually the occasion for all kinds of festivities, eating

and drinking, dancing, and music, and there is a fair, where quantities of toys, cakes, sacred images, etc., are sold.

Outdoor amusements and physical exercise do not occupy the same position in Italy as they do in England, but there are many people who are devoted to them, and several sports are thoroughly national institutions. Italians of all classes are very fond of shooting, and everybody who can afford a gun license and a gun frequently goes out for a day's sport. Only a small number of estates are closed shootings (*bandite di caccia*); all the rest of the Italian soil is open to the public for sporting purposes. In the larger *bandite* the landed gentry arrange regular shooting parties, with a number of dogs, keepers, and beaters. Even then the large bags which are made on English and Scotch estates are unknown. But the ordinary sport enjoyed by thousands is a far simpler affair. Professional men, especially barristers and doctors, Government clerks, university students, etc., go out with dog and gun to climb the hills and wait, like Mr. Micawber, for something to turn up. The sportsman wears a loose jacket of homespun, the large pockets of which have long vertical openings under the armpits, trousers of the same material, and gaiters. He has a dog—a pointer or a setter—and that with his gun forms his whole equipment. The bag he brings home is small; it contains perhaps a hare, a couple of snipe, and half a dozen small birds.

With that he is more than satisfied. There are no birds which he may not shoot, save swallows, and as real game is dying out, owing to this ruthless destruction, he falls back on sparrows, tom-tits, and larks. All these small bags make up a large total, and even the small birds are being gradually exterminated, to the great detriment of agriculture, as they would otherwise destroy noxious insects. There is now a useful crusade being waged against this "massacre of the innocents," but its supporters have an uphill task before them. There is an idea among a large number of people, especially in the country, that the destruction of birds does not really matter, because if it does damage the crops, you eat the birds, and so are compensated for your loss! Game laws exist, but they are far from strict, and on the whole more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Judges seldom impose any but the lightest penalties for poaching or for shooting out of the season. A great deal of the destruction is due to the popular amusement of catching birds with nets. There are various systems, but the result is the same. It is the only means by which fairly large bags may be obtained (from sixty to one hundred diminutive birds). These nets and the arrangements for decoying the quarry display an ingenuity worthy of a better cause. In a great many families in the country a course of small birds is always the *pièce de résistance* of the dinner, and Italians are all ex-

tremely fond of them. A dish of *tordi* (thrushes) is regarded as the height of earthly bliss.

Of athletic sports, fencing, cycling, boating, and tennis are popular, and in some of these Italians rank high. Fox-hunting has become quite a feature of the Roman Campagna, and golf and other English games are played in various parts of the country. But there are one or two games which are typically Italian, and almost unknown in other countries. In the old city republics athletic sports of a very violent nature were constantly played. In Florence there was the *calcio*, the ancestor of football, and Pisa was famous for the *giuoco del ponte*. At Siena there were many strange games, and in other towns similar exercises were practised. All these games were of the nature of regular battles, and usually ended in a free fight and bloodshed. The *calcio* was, in fact, abolished in grand-ducal days on account of the heavy casualty lists which every match entailed. Within the last five or six years it has been revived in Florence, but although at first the old rules were adhered to, owing to the fact that many of the players were acquainted with football, the rules of the English game have gradually superseded the original ones. Several towns have their own football clubs; that of Turin is said to be the best. A typically national game is the *pallone*, which attracts crowds of enthusiastic spectators day after day. Its origin is probably Tuscan, but it is played in many other

parts of the country as well. The *pallone* ground is an asphalt court 312 feet long and 53 feet broad. On one side there is a wall 50 feet high, on the other side and at each end the seats for the spectators. There are six players, three on each side, and the *mandarino* or sender, who is not a regular player. The game is played with a hard leather ball, fifteen inches in diameter, weighing about twelve ounces. Each player wears a white jacket and knickerbockers, white stockings, white shoes, and a blue or red sash, according to his side. On his right hand he has a curious sort of glove, called a *bracciale*. It is a hollow wooden cylinder studded with blunt wooden spikes at regular intervals. The part which strikes the ball is made of extra hard wood. The player inserts his hand into the opening and grasps a cross piece at the other end. This instrument weighs  $4\frac{1}{2}$  lbs., and with the spikes has a circumference of twenty-four inches. It sends the ball to an enormous height and at a terrific speed. The three players on each side are called respectively the *battitore* (striker), the *spalla* (shoulder), who supports the former, and the *terzino* (third), who plays forward.

The number of sets played varies according to private arrangement. The *mandarino* sends the ball to the *battitore*, who stands at some distance behind him on a spring board. As it comes towards him the *battitore* rushes forward and strikes it into the opposite court, while the *mandarino* drops down flat to avoid it. It is then sent back.

wards and forwards, according to rules similar to those of lawn tennis, and the points scored are 15, 30, 40, game. If the ball goes outside the court, over the wall, or among the spectators at the side, it counts against the side which sent it; but if it goes beyond the court at the opposite end it counts for them, as only the most herculean player can deliver such a stroke. The wall plays an important part in the game. The ball may strike against it without disqualifying the hit. The most skilful play is done close up against the wall, and it requires the greatest ability to calculate exactly at what angle the ball will rebound from it. The attitudes of the players are strikingly picturesque, and their figures fine and well built. The game requires uncommon skill and strength, so that it is played by professionals, with very few exceptions. It is impossible to learn it unless one gives up most of one's time to it. It has an undoubted element of danger, as the ball is heavy and driven with tremendous force; it has been known to cause serious and even fatal injuries. The players receive fairly good salaries—from £14 to £20 a month—and the best ones are great favourites with the people. The spectators are most appreciative and highly excitable; but they are not so much interested in the outcome of the game as in the strokes of individual players, for the betting is based on the single scores. Persons of all ranks in life are found among the audience, but the working men and shop assistants of the

towns are the keenest observers. The cheapest places (3*d.* a head) are those opposite the wall, where the ball pays most frequent visits, though there it rarely inflicts any grievous harm. At each end there are the better places, where the ball comes less often, at 5*d.* a head, and above these the "aristocratic" seats, protected by wire-netting, at 10*d.* A good stroke is followed by yells of applause, but the public will not brook unfair play. If there is reason to believe, as there sometimes is, that a player has been "got at" and is not playing square, the crowd breaks into the court, tries to seize the players, attacks the *totalizzatore* (the man who attends to the betting), and demands its money back. A *pallone* player should be, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion. The betting is of a very modest nature. You buy one or more tickets at 10*d.* each on a particular player; the money thus collected is divided among the backers of the winner, minus the *totalizzatore*'s ten per cent commission. The chief defect of the game is that very few people can take part in it. As far as the ordinary public is concerned, it is a spectacle rather than an athletic sport.

There are many other forms of gambling in Italy besides the *pallone*. The passion is exceedingly common, and every young man, whether he be a gentleman's son or a shop assistant, gambles more or less. There are, of course, the usual forms of betting — cards, racing, etc.—but one which has no counterpart in England is the State

lottery (*Regio lotto*). That the State should thus encourage gambling is undoubtedly a serious evil, and its only justification is of a fiscal nature, as the lottery brings in to the treasury an annual revenue of £1,000,000. In eight of the principal towns in Italy there are drawing centres of the *lotto*, and every Saturday afternoon the numbers are drawn in public. In each centre there is a director of the *lotto*, and a director-general in Rome. The numbers are drawn in the presence of the local director, and of the representatives of the Syndic and the Prefect. There are ninety numbers (from 1 to 90), each of which is shown to the public, folded up by the director, and passed on to the Prefect's representative, who places it in a hollow metal ball. The ball is shut up and given to a small boy from an orphanage, who places it in a wire receptacle. After every ten balls the latter is revolved so as to mix them up. The boy is then blindfolded, has his sleeve rolled up, puts his hand into the receptacle, and draws out five balls. The Prefect's representative opens them, unfolds the numbers, reads them out, and puts them upon a scoring-board. The five numbers are telegraphed to the other seven centres, and by the next morning it is known all over Italy. There are seventeen hundred lottery offices, farmed out to *ricevitori*, where you can buy tickets. The game is played in various ways. You may take an *estratto semplice*, which means that you bet that a certain number will

appear; if it does you win  $10\frac{1}{2}$  times your stake. Or you take an *estratto determinato*, i. e., you wager that your number will occupy a particular position (the third place, for instance); if it does, you win  $52\frac{1}{2}$  times your stake. Another very usual way is to play an *ambo*, which means wagering that two numbers will appear among the five, and the prize is two hundred and fifty times the stake. Then there are the *terno*, the *quaterno*, and other complicated forms. You can wager on numbers appearing not merely in your own centre, but in any of the eight centres. The odds are always very much against the player and in favour of the lottery. In 1899, for instance, the profits were forty-seven per cent of the total takings, and amounted to over £1,000,000 net. A curious feature of the *lotto* is the way in which the numbers are chosen. People are not so casual as to take the first numbers that come into their heads; there is a regular system of interpreting dreams and events into numbers that are believed likely to come out. One method is to play such numbers as are conspicuously brought to your notice by hearing them cried out, or by seeing them written upon a wall or a box. Or else you choose them according to a dream or an event. If you dream the numbers directly you are most fortunate, for, in the opinion of those who know, they are sure to come out. But if not, you must interpret ordinary dreams and occurrences by means of the *Vero Libro dei Sogni*, which gives

the numbers for everything. The Milan riots, the murder of King Humbert, the fatal Cavallotti duel, great robberies, serious accidents, all have their numbers. If you dream that you saw a dead child in a garden, you consult the book for "child," then for "dead," then for "garden." The numbers vary according as the child was a male or a female, a baby or a child that could walk, clothed or naked, etc. Many stories are told of dreams which, thus interpreted, came true, and caused the player to win large sums of money. A friend of mine had a most unfortunate experience. At the time of the death of Signor Cavallotti he played in Rome and Florence the numbers suggested by the *Book of Dreams*. They all came out, but at *Bari!* Certain persons, such as monks, or old women, are believed to know the numbers of the *lotto*, and are eagerly consulted. Many further details and amusing anecdotes on this subject will be found in Mr. Carmichael's excellent little book, *In Tuscany*. The lottery passion is a common one all over Italy, but it is most prevalent in the South, whence the State draws half the earnings from this source. In spite of the serious evils of State gambling, there is no very strong feeling in the country against it, as it is felt that were it suppressed the State would have to make good its loss by imposing fresh and unpopular taxes, while it would not prevent people from gambling in other ways. It is, in fact, regarded as a sort of safety-valve.



## CHAPTER XVI

### LITERATURE AND THE PRESS

THE literary output of modern Italy is very considerable. Although there are few people who live by their pen alone, there is an immense number of men and women who devote a part of their time to literary pursuits. Owing, however, to the grave social, political, and economic problems with which Italy is beset, the literary activities of her ablest men have been directed towards sociology, economics, and science, rather than towards poetry, fiction, or criticism. In various fields many Italian writers have distinguished themselves, and the reputations of some extend beyond the frontiers of their own country. Much of their work, unfortunately, is prolix and rhetorical, especially in the case of political writings, and a love of abstract theories and high-sounding phrases is very conspicuous. With two or three notable exceptions, inciseness of style and simplicity of diction are entirely wanting. The same fault is to be found even in the works of the best poets and novelists, and in these, as in the former, much good stuff is buried

in a mass of superfluities. Modern Italians have a great admiration for the Germans, and have followed their methods to a considerable and undesirable extent.

Writers whose works are essentially of a literary nature find themselves in a somewhat difficult position. In the first place, there is the language question. Literary Italian is understood by the mass of the people in Tuscany, and by a small educated class alone in other parts of the country. Moreover, it has its limitations, and if a writer wishes to describe scenes of every-day life he is bound to resort to dialect to a certain extent. If he desires to give local colour to his books, and describes manners and customs or traditions, he will not be appreciated save by a very small number of readers. A writer like Charles Dickens would be impossible in Italy, for any one who wishes to find his characters among the lower classes cannot make them appear living save at the cost of his public being limited to one province.

In the second place, literature does not pay. There are not more than half a dozen authors who make decent incomes out of their writings. The enormous sales realised by English and French books are hardly credited by Italians. The number of people who buy books at all, quite apart from all questions of dialect and language, is very small. Many Italians who are educated and intelligent never think of buying a book

unless obliged to do so for their work. In the average middle-class household, literature is represented by a copy of Dante, one of Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi*, a cheap encyclopædia (usually incomplete), two or three novels by third-rate authors, a volume of verse by a friend of the family, and some operatic librettos. People who have not made a profession of scholarship, read extremely little. Among the upper classes there is an "intellectual" set which is interested in literature, and is generally well read, but outside of it books are regarded as superfluous luxuries. Even those who are fond of reading cannot always afford to purchase them, and therefore only borrow them from friends. As a consequence, many authors do not get paid at all for their works, and are lucky if they manage to avoid publishing them at their own expense; others are able to make a little money out of literature, and a very few are able to live by it. But even these authors—like D'Annunzio, De Amicis, Matilde Serao—depend more on their royalties from translations than on the sale of their books in Italy.

But in spite of all these difficulties, Italy has produced some living authors of considerable merit. Among a host of minor or minimus poets, she has one who is of real distinction—Giosuè Carducci. Born in 1836, he was an ardent Mazzinian and Republican in 1848, and his early poems were inspired with the most impetuous revolutionary and democratic enthusiasm. But

in later years his political opinions changed, and he is now a devoted adherent of the Monarchy. He is a professor of Italian literature at Bologna and author of editions of numerous Italian classics, as well as of many critical works in prose. But it is on his poetry that his reputation rests. He is thoroughly imbued with the pagan spirit, which is still such an important element of the Italian nature. He has voiced the classical emanations of the soil of Italy, and given them form in sober and powerful verse. An erudite scholar in classical and modern literature, he is never pedantic. He has assimilated the feelings of the Latin authors, or rather their mantle has descended upon him, and he makes us realise how strong the Roman leaven is among the people. Of all his volumes of poetry, that which excited most interest and is the most typical is the *Odi Barbare*. In these poems he imitates the metres of Horace, and although the subjects are not all classical they evince an unmistakably classical cast of mind. *Alle Fonti del Clitumno* is one of the most beautiful evocations of antiquity in modern literature. Carducci is an intense lover of natural beauty, and describes scenery with the most delicate touch; but it is in the human ideas which the scenes evoke that he is at his best. The poem *Miramar*, a reminiscence of the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, with a pathetic allusion to the madness of his widow, the poem on the death of the Prince Imperial, the verses on the French Rev-

olution, all combine the severe strength of classical literature with an essentially modern spirit. In the *Ninna-nanna di Carlo Quinto*, "Jaufrè Rudel," and "Davanti al Castel Vecchio di Verona," are of a romantic character, and express his feeling for history and for mediaeval legend. In *Teodorico* and in *Sul Campo di Marengo* he describes the struggle between the Roman spirit and mediævalism, and the respect which even the anti-imperial republican warriors of Lombardy ever felt for the name and dignity of Cæsar. Natural beauty combined with classical reminiscences is the burden of the *Primavere Elleniche. Sogno d'Estate, Sui Colli Toscani, Il Bove*, etc., are full of an intense feeling for landscape, flowers, and fields.

A more recent singer is Signora Ada Negri. An elementary schoolmistress in a remote Lombard village, from time to time she published short poems of great tenderness and feeling in various periodicals. They were republished subsequently in two volumes, *Fatalità* and *Tempeste*. She tells the story of her narrow and unhappy life, the hard and uncongenial labour, the hopeless monotony, and her longing for sympathy and love which she failed to find. She has a genuine compassion for the toilers of the earth, the artisans, and the oppressed, but only hatred and bitter contempt for the rich and the well-born. She came early under the influence of socialism, and in several of her poems she prophesies the social

revolution and the advent of a new order of things when the tyrants shall be crushed and the slaves raised to freedom. But while her invectives against social injustice are most savage and incisive, at times she is all tenderness and pity. She is the poetess of sorrow and suffering, and since she has made a happy marriage she has written no more verse until a few months ago, when she published some pathetic lines in a Milanese review on the death of her child.

During the middle of the nineteenth century a bitter literary war raged between the "idealists" and the "realists." The general tendency of Italian literature was in favour of the latter school, which found its champion in "Lorenzo Stecchetti." In 1877, a volume of verse appeared, entitled *Postuma*. They were declared to be by an unhappy poet named Lorenzo Stecchetti, who had died of consumption when still quite young, and edited by his cousin Olindo Guerrini. It was followed, in 1878, by another volume called *Nuova Polemica*. The poems are extremely sentimental and mawkish, but at the same time blasphemous and indecent. Here and there one finds a good line, a poetical idea, a delicate sense of natural beauty; but the majority of the poems are feeble and vapid productions. *Polemica* contains long disquisitions on the merits of the realists and bitter diatribes against the idealists, and is rather more immoral than *Postuma*. Both volumes

obtained a considerable amount of popularity, owing to that blend of sentimentality and indecency which appeals to a certain class of readers, and also on account of the romantic and tragic story with which they were connected. Unfortunately, however, it turned out that "there was n't no such person" as Lorenzo Stecchetti, and that the real author of the poems was Signor Olindo Guerrini himself; the latter is, like Mr. W. S. Gilbert's poet, a "very delectable highly respectable threepenny 'bus young man," a librarian at Bologna, devoted to his family, of blameless private life, who never allows his children to read his own productions. However, the little fiction served its purpose by arousing interest and increasing the sale of the poems. Another volume, by the same author, appeared a few years ago, called *Rime di Argia Sbolenfi*, with a preface by "Lorenzo Stecchetti." It is weaker than the others in everything but the indecencies; the heroine is a more depraved and decadent type than even "Lorenzo Stecchetti."

Fiction is a literary form which has only been taken up seriously in Italy within the last quarter of a century. When Manzoni wrote his *I Promessi Sposi*, it may be said that there was no such thing as an Italian novel. The position occupied by that work is a very peculiar one. Every other form of literature had been produced by Italian writers, but no one had thought it worth while to write novels. Manzoni had to study foreign

authors for his models, especially the works of Sir Walter Scott. *I Promessi Sposi* proved from the first an enormous success, and was regarded as a classic almost immediately. Italians came to the conclusion that it was the greatest novel ever written; if you mentioned any foreign author to them they would say, "But we have Manzoni," as if he was the last word in the field of fiction. It is undoubtedly a fine novel, although it does not quite deserve the fulsome praise which the author's countrymen bestowed upon it. But it made no school. A few imitations were attempted by Guerrazzi, D'Azeglio, Cantù, and others, but their novels were all exceedingly dull and long-winded, and if they enjoyed a certain popularity it was because there was nothing else. A number of novels were translated from the French, English, and German, but it is only within recent years that an indigenous school of fiction has arisen.

A common feature of modern Italian novels is that they are nearly all love stories, love being the one subject which interests the readers of fiction. Most of them deal with illicit love, either to show up its evil consequences or merely for the sake of painting an ugly side of life. Some describe the struggle between love and duty, some between pure love and impure love, but it is always love in some form or another. One does occasionally come across a short story without a love interest, but a novel never. Even novels in

which love comes in without being the main interest are extremely rare. Stories of adventure, detective novels, political, military, or socialistic novels are almost unknown. The school which has most adherents among the novelists of to-day is that of realism.

The chief exponents of this doctrine are Gabriele D'Annunzio and Giovanni Verga. Signor D'Annunzio is at present the most discussed of Italian authors; he is worshipped by a small group of devoted admirers, while in others he only arouses a feeling of repulsion. He is the apostle of hedonism, the arch-priest of sensuality; pleasure is his one article of faith. He began his literary career as a poet, and published several volumes of verse—*Intermezzo di Rime*, *Canto Nuovo*, *Poema Paradisiaco*, *L'Isottee*—in which he describes his own passions, his moral cowardice, his total lack of character. Some of these poems are graceful and contain some good verse, but many are blasphemous and indecent. Poetry being too concise a form for his introspective nature, he turned to the more congenial field of fiction. His earlier prose writings are short stories illustrating the lives of the Abruzzi peasantry. The volume *San Pantaleone*, like all his other works, is terribly sordid and pathological, but in it he reveals an incisiveness of style which he has since lost. The first story, to which we have already alluded, is particularly powerful, and others in the same volume are extremely interesting. After these

first attempts he took to writing novels of an analytical character. Like the works of the French writers, by whom he is chiefly inspired, they are in series. The first of these is called "The Romances of the Rose,"—*Il Piacere, L'Innocente, Il Trionfo della Morte*; the second are "The Romances of the Lily," and the third, "The Romances of the Pomegranate," but only the first novel of each of the last two series have as yet appeared, i. e., *Le Vergini delle Roccie* and *Il Fuoco*. D'Annunzio's idea was probably to form a sort of Italian "Ring der Nibelungen," but the connecting links are not very apparent. All these novels are extremely long-winded, and filled with endless repetitions and a wealth of adjectives and epithets that are most wearisome. Their subjects are morbid and excessively monotonous, and the heroes all exactly alike. Each volume deals with the same man, though under different aliases, representing the author himself. The type is that of a complete egotist—weak, depraved, vicious in the extreme, completely lacking in moral sense and in all courage, save that which enables him to fight a duel, morally and physically diseased, and ready to sacrifice any one or anything to his bestial passions. The interest lies in the effect which this creature produces on other people. The heroines are more varied: Ippolita is low-born, vulgar, cruel, and naturally vicious; Elena Nuti is a high-bred courtesan; the three sisters in the *Vergini delle Roccie* have aris-

tocratic distinction, but are somewhat shadowy,<sup>1</sup> Maria Ferres is delicate and sweet, and La Foscarina more sinned against than sinning (she is brought to her final ruin by her odious lover). In none of these books, however, is there a single wholesome feeling, or a single noble action. The author is entirely wanting in humour and in sympathy. He has no pity for suffering, but delights to show it in its most repulsive forms. On old age and ugliness he is merciless—witness his picture of the old lady in the *Trionfo della Morte*, and his disgusting insistence on the decaying physical charms of La Foscarina in *Il Fuoco*. D'Annunzio revels in wickedness and indecency, and does not spare us a single detail that is loathsome. To find a parallel, one must go back to the *Satyricon* of Petronius, to certain poems of Catullus, to Fracastoro.<sup>2</sup> His chief merit lies in his language, which is rich, flowing, and effective. But even this quality leads him into a fault, for he gets drunk with the sound of his own words, and makes his characters deliver endless orations, which run through several chapters, and are usually quite irrelevant. He has a genuine love for natural beauty and is thoroughly imbued with

<sup>1</sup> The book itself, though far less corrupt than any of the others, is appallingly monotonous.

<sup>2</sup> In the French and English translations of his novels, whole chapters have been cut out, so that those who only know them through these mediums can have no idea of the corruption which they contain.

the pagan spirit. His description of Venice in *Il Fuoco* is very picturesque, but he writes as though he had discovered the Queen of the Adriatic. His descriptions of Italian life may be applicable to a small and depraved set, but they are by no means true with regard to the whole people. His influence is wholly evil, for he gives his readers nothing but evil to think about. Even his finest passages and descriptions are so thoroughly sensuous and sickly that they end by nauseating one. As a play-writer he has proved a failure, as his latest work, *Francesca da Rimini* is his feeblest.

To read the works of Antonio Fogazzaro after a course of D'Annunzio is like coming out of a sewer and finding one's self on an Engadine plateau. Signor Fogazzaro is at the present moment undoubtedly the greatest of Italian novelists. It would be difficult to find two writers more unlike than Fogazzaro and D'Annunzio. The one is all lofty idealism and ennobling enthusiasm, the other the apostle of degradation, scepticism, and corruption; the one wholesome and healthy, the other morbid and diseased; the one altruistic and Christian, the other egotistic and pagan; the one appeals to all that is best and purest in man, the other panders to the vilest passions. Signor Fogazzaro, too, began as a poet and his verses are full of gentle sympathy and genuine piety. In his first poem, *Miranda*, there is a certain German flavour, as, in fact, there is in several of his other writings. *A Sera* is

pernicious distinction, ~~but~~ ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~poem~~, full of religious thoughts, ~~and~~ ~~is~~ ~~delicate~~ ~~as~~ ~~the~~ ~~ring~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~church~~ ~~bells~~ ~~at~~ ~~sunset~~ ~~from~~ ~~west~~ ~~than~~ ~~the~~ ~~horses~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~valley~~. The burden of their song is a prayer to God to protect humanity from the evil spirits of the approaching night, for pity on the living and the dead, for all the secret sin, the suffering, and the deep sorrow of the world. There are fine ideas in the sonnet on St. Mark's and in a poem on Venice.

He has a real love for nature, and the scenery of his beloved Vicenza, of the Colli Berici, and of the Valsolda near the Lake of Lugano forms the background to most of his novels. Every leaf, every stone, every stream is full of meaning for him. Signor Fogazzaro shows us Italian life in a very different way from that of the so-called "realists." He does not by any means close his eyes to the evil which is there, but he also dwells on the good, and shows how evil may be overcome. He is inspired by a pure idealism and noble aims—patriotism, religion, and devotion to duty. His first novel, *Malombra*, although it contains much that is good, is somewhat prosy, ill constructed, and sensational. In *Daniele Cortis* we have the story of a pure and good woman who is married to a scoundrel while her heart is elsewhere, for she loves Daniele Cortis. The latter is a young and wealthy Venetian gentleman, who is at the beginning of what promises to be a brilliant political career.

husband is obliged to give up his seat in the Senate, and to leave Italy in disgrace, in consequence of some more than shady financial transactions, his wife decides, after a fearful struggle, to follow him, lest her love for Cortis should become a guilty passion; the latter admits that she is acting right, and determines to devote himself heart and soul to his country's service. Fogazzaro here develops his political creed, which is a mixture of Mazzinian ideals with Christian democracy. Although a fervent Catholic, he is by no means a Clerical, for he is a genuine patriot, and his views naturally failed to meet the approval of the Vatican Press. He is a Monarchist; but he wishes the Monarch to be a real influence for good in the country and an ally of religion. He believes that the regeneration of Italy will come not from an ideal form of government, be it Monarchical, Republican, or Socialistic, nor from any outburst of revolution or class war, but from a moral elevation of the people; and this elevation is the object of all his writings, for he believes that literature should play no mean part in this work. Besides its main moral and political interest, *Daniele Cortis* contains some charming descriptions of scenery in the Vicentino and an excellent picture of Italian country life. *Piccolo Mondo Antico* is considered by many to be his masterpiece. The scene is laid in the Valsolda and the neighbourhood of the Lake of Lugano; the story deals with the days when the

Austrians ruled in Lombardy, and society was divided into patriots and *Austriacanti*. The finest episode in the book is the flight of Franco and his friends across the border. Here, too, the religious element is introduced, for the hero's faith enables him to bear up against grief at the loss of his child, while his wife, who does not believe, breaks down completely. Signor Fogazzaro's last novel is *Piccolo Mondo Moderno*, in which the hero is the son of the hero of the former novel. It has many fine points, but is, on the whole, inferior to *Piccolo Mondo Antico*. His principal defect as a novelist is that he writes novels with a purpose, and makes his chief characters personify his own views, with the object of expounding a theory, which renders them somewhat colourless. But his nobility of feeling, his wide sympathy, his kindness, and breezy humour entitle him to a high place among writers of fiction.

The most popular of living Italian authors is Edmondo De Amicis. He was formerly an officer in the army, and while still in the service he began to write articles and stories, which met with so much favour that he determined to devote himself entirely to literature. His greatest success is *Cuore*, a collection of impressions and short stories supposed to be told by a boy at an elementary school. It is written with simplicity and charm, and some of the tales, like *Dagli Appennini alle Ande*, are full of gentle pathos. But it also contains a number of gushing, moral dis-

quisitions which would make any healthy-minded schoolboy sick. Still *Cuore* has reached a circulation of two hundred and fifty thousand copies, and has been translated into several foreign languages. *La Vita Militare* is a series of sketches of military life, and a very readable little book. The novel, *Il Romanzo d'un Maestro* is a more serious work, and gives a terrible picture of the grinding poverty and deadly monotony of an elementary schoolmaster's life. Signor De Amicis has published several volumes of travel sketches on Morocco, Spain, Holland, Turkey, Constantinople, etc., and deals with the emigration question in *Sull' Oceano*. All these studies are very widely read, as literature of this sort is uncommon in Italy, and the author certainly knows how to describe things seen, most effectively, although to Northern readers, he may sometimes appear too sentimental. His last book, *La Carrozza di Tutti*, consists of sketches of various types met in the Turin street-cars; it is brightly written, but slight.

Giovanni Verga belongs to the realistic school, and is a powerful writer on Sicilian subjects. His earlier novels, such as *Tigre Reale*, are sensational and old-fashioned, of a type still affected by minor Italian novelists. But later he developed into a realist of the most uncompromising type. His best known books are, *I Malavoglia*, a story of the struggle for life among the poor, and *Mastro Don Gesualdo*, which deals with provincial life in Sicily.

But it is as a writer of short stories that he is at his best. His picture of the modern Sicilian—sordid, greedy, brutal, cruel, utterly wanting in moral sense, depraved, and vicious—is a truly awful one, but perhaps somewhat exaggerated. His *Cavalleria Rusticana* is the work with which abroad his name is most intimately associated, on account of Mascagni's opera on that subject; but his other volumes are no less powerful and interesting. He gives most heartrending descriptions of disease and starvation in his *Novelle Rusticane*. We realise the terrible monotony of the eternally blue sky whence the longed-for rain never falls, the dull brown fields which refuse to bear crops, the feeling of despair at the approach of starvation, which deadens all men's better instincts and makes of them mere beasts. Another story in the volume, *L'Asino di San Giuseppe*, is the Odyssey of the sufferings of a wretched donkey, whose lot becomes ever more miserable as his masters become poorer. *Malaria* illustrates the ravages of that fell disease. Another volume, *Per le Vie*, contains sketches of life in a modern city; these, too, are painfully sordid. Verga's style is concise and virile, and his characters are drawn with a few firm, hard touches; but he is lacking in delicacy and sympathy, and dwells rather too much on unpleasant details.

Signora Matilde Serao, a lady journalist of distinction, is the author of several successful novels and sketches dealing in a realistic way with Nea-

politan life. Her descriptions are very graphic, but somewhat overcharged, and she occasionally lapses into vulgarity. Her most recent novel, *Suor Giovanna della Croce*, is a pitiful tale of a nun, whose convent has been suppressed and who has to go forth into the world after having belonged to the order of the *sepolte vive* (buried alive) for forty years. The account of her gradually increasing misery is well told, but painful in the extreme. In the last scene she is eating a free dinner given to the very poorest on Easter Sunday.

There are a number of Italian authors who write in dialect, some of them with distinction of style. Signor Renato Fucini's ("Neri Tanfucio") descriptions in prose and verse of the life and thoughts of the Tuscan lower classes are both humorous and sympathetic, and light of touch. The *Creazione del Mondo* and *Dante* are delightfully witty little poems illustrative of the way in which the Pisan *popolano* looks at things. The best writer of Roman dialect verse is Signor Pasarella.

The Italian Press is very much like that of other Continental countries. It has neither the independence of judgment nor the accuracy of information which characterise the English Press, and its object is a somewhat different one. The Italian newspaper does not aim at informing the public as to what is going on in the world; it exists to propagate the ideas of some party or of some individual politician. News is matter

of almost secondary interest, and facts are frequently altered to suit theories. The papers do not pay, because industrial activity is not yet sufficiently developed for them to be supported by advertisements. The Milan papers, especially the *Corriere della Sera*, are an exception, just because industry does flourish in Lombardy. Most of the others are either financed by the funds of some party or of some party leader, or subsidised by the Government. There are numbers of one-man newspapers run by a politician who wishes to air his own views. In the majority of cases the leading articles are signed, and are on the first page (no Italian paper has more than four pages). The information deals mostly with home and local affairs, but accuracy is not usually a feature of Italian journalism, owing to the desire of the editors to turn the events of the day to account for political purposes. Foreign affairs only occupy a small part of the newspaper, and in this field an astounding amount of ignorance is displayed. Some papers are better informed than others, but one can seldom rely on the truth of the statements which one reads in them.

Although daily papers are numerous, there is no newspaper which is read all over the country, like *The Times* or any of the other great London dailies. The Milan *Corriere della Sera* is rarely seen south of Florence, nor the *Tribuna* of Rome north of Bologna. Each large city has its own newspaper for the whole province or region.

The Italian newspaper reader has a pretty taste in horrors, and the editors undertake to supply him with plenty of pabulum of this kind. There are always special headings for crimes, suicides, etc., such as *Cronaca Nera* (black chronicle), *Drammi dell' Adulterio*, *Drammi della Miseria*, *Fatti di Sangue* (deeds of blood), *Belve Umane* (human wild beasts). The local news of a less violent character often affords amusing reading. Half a column will be devoted to the misfortunes of a servant girl who lost her umbrella and was robbed of her purse in an omnibus, or to the doings of a clever swindler. Weddings come under the heading, *Cronaca Rosa* (rose-coloured chronicle), or *Fiori d'Arancio* (orange-flowers). Obituary notices are far more elaborate than in English papers. Italians would certainly not be satisfied with—

“Smith. On the 3rd inst. Thomas Smith, of Sea View Lodge, Cromer. Aged sixty.”

Here is a specimen from an Italian paper:

Giulia N., born S.

After a severe illness borne with exemplary resignation, provided with the consolations of religion, rendered her soul to God, at the hour of 15.40 [3.40 P.M.], on the 25th inst.

Her husband, Alberto N. [here follow the names and professions of a quantity of relatives], their souls oppressed by deep sorrow, make the sad announcement.

The funeral will take place on Tuesday the 27th inst.

A prayer for the departed.

Rome, June 25, 1901.

Among the advertisements there are generally a few of this sort:

**MARRIAGE** :—A man of business, aged 40, cultured, excellent conduct, elevated soul, affable, very earnest, light humour, perfect health, agreeable, living alone, desires to marry a spinster or a widow without children, possessing corresponding requisites, capable of co-operating with him in management of business, *dot* 50,000 lire in cash.

It is said that a good many people have attained to the matrimonial state in this way. The advertisements must be of some use, as otherwise they would not be worth paying for. It is hardly necessary, however, to add that it is not a common practice, and that it is not resorted to in the best society!

Italy is rich in monthly and fortnightly reviews and magazines. The best review is unquestionably the *Nuova Antologia*, which, under the able editorship of Signor Maggiorino Ferraris, compares favourably with foreign periodicals. The cleverest writers contribute to its pages, and it always contains interesting matter on political, social, historical, and literary subjects, as well as poetry and fiction. There are other periodicals of a more special nature, for particular subjects, some of which are very scholarly. Social questions and economics are exhaustively dealt with.

One must recollect when judging the Italian Press that for the most part its output is wholly

non-remunerative. The regular staffs of the daily papers receive salaries, but at a much lower rate than even the incomes of average professional men. But all outside contributors are either not paid or paid a mere trifle. The *Corriere della Sera* pays its contributors much better, and so does the *Nuova Antologia* among the magazines.

On the whole it may be said that literature, like other branches of national activity, has made progress during the last twenty or thirty years. Traditional restrictions are being gradually abolished, servile imitation of stereotyped models discontinued, and a certain amount of originality developed. Modern Italian writers have a long way to go before they will attain to the standard of the great Italian authors of the past, or even to that of the contemporary literature of some other countries, but there is great hope for the future.





## CHAPTER XVII

### ART AND MUSIC OF TO-DAY

THE artistic sense among modern Italians is very much weaker than it was among their ancestors. Wars, political revolutions, the necessities of daily life, and poverty have somewhat weaned the Italians from that love of art which was once a national characteristic. For more than a century Italy has produced no great artists, and if in recent years there has been an artistic revival, it cannot be denied that the mass of the people, including the majority of the middle class and of the aristocracy, care very little for art in any form save music. The average Italian cannot understand the intense interest which foreigners take in the buildings of Rome, the galleries of Florence, the palaces of Venice. He is to a certain extent proud of these things, as national glories, but it is a mystery to him why people should want to see them again and again. When an Italian visits Rome for the first time he "does" the principal sights, and that is all. He pays little attention to details and he does not trouble to seek out less famous things of

beauty—some church containing a glorious bit of mosaic or a masterpiece by an unknown hand, hidden away in a dark slum, a little corner where a stately grey palace, half ruined, stands in the midst of a deserted garden, a Della Robbia in a remote country church. A certain number of Italians are genuinely interested in art, and in almost every town there are a few men who know every stone and every picture which it contains. Among the more cultured part of the aristocracy, too, there is a set which really appreciates all forms of art and knows something about them. But to the mind of the ordinary Italian, admiration for an old picture or a statue is the distinguishing mark of the foreigner. When a proposal is made to pull down an old building of historic and artistic interest it does not strike him as sacrilege, especially if it is for the sake of a tramway.

There is, however, some excuse for this absence of the artistic sense. Italians are aware that, as a modern nation, they have still much progress to make. They are striving to go forward, to increase their wealth and their industries; but they see that foreigners for the most part look upon them merely as historical curiosities. Lamartine once wrote some cruel verses about Italy being the land of the dead. Many foreigners, especially Germans, will spend months admiring Roman ruins, but look upon the natives with undisguised contempt. The Italians, of course, resent this, and, conscious as they are of their

own shortcomings as a people, they are anxious to put antiquity behind them and to bring their country up to date. Now that some real progress has been made, a few are beginning to feel that they can devote themselves to art without being mere showmen.

Modern Italian art may be said to have begun with the late Signor Domenico Morelli. Before he began to paint (in the early fifties) there had been no real art in Italy since the death of Tiepolo. There had, of course, been the inevitable struggle between the classical school and the romantic school in art as in literature, but both the classicists and the romanticists were academic and weak, only differing in that the former painted *Orpheus and Eurydice*, the *Death of Caesar*, the *Gladiator*, *Cupid*, and *Psyche*, while the latter chose the *Death of Ferruccio*, the *Challenge of Barletta*, or the *Battle of Legnano* for their subjects. But in Naples, which in other respects was so far behind the rest of Italy, a group of young painters arose who despised academic tradition, and who painted nature as she really was, and were imbued with a deep and genuine artistic feeling. Of these the ablest were Domenico Morelli and Filippo Palizzi. The former was undoubtedly the greater of the two, and his influence on modern art has been considerable. In his first pictures he chose romantic subjects from Byron, Tasso, and Manzoni, but he treated them in a novel and unconventional way. In 1855, he trav-



THE PIAZZA DEL POPOLO—ROME



elled abroad and visited the galleries of Germany, France, and Belgium. He was much influenced by Rembrandt and other Dutch masters, and by Delaroche among the modern ones. Like Verdi in music, he assimilated the discoveries of other painters and made them his own; he evolved out of them something entirely new and original. Later in life he took to painting religious subjects and Eastern scenes. Although he had never been to the East himself, his work is full of the true Oriental colouring and atmosphere. One of his best known works is *The Temptations of St. Anthony*. The saint—a perfect type of ascetic—is in a cave absorbed in prayer and meditation, while to the left under the matting rise visions of fair women, tempting him to sin. The contrast between the pure and holy nature of the saint, with his far-away look, and the voluptuous smiles of his tempters is admirably rendered. Another celebrated picture of his is the *Madonna of the Golden Stair*. The Virgin, who is of a Hebrew type, instead of the usual Italian type painted by other artists, is descending the Golden Stairs, attired in blue and pink, carrying the infant Christ in her arms. The child is happy and smiling, but behind the smile is a look of sorrow, and the arms, thrown out apparently in childish glee, suggest the tragedy of the Cross. The stairs are strewn with flowers, and go up until they are lost in the blue heavens. The colouring is rich and harmonious: the pink hue of the Virgin's robe

reminds one almost of Veronese. Among his Eastern compositions, one of the finest is *Mahomed Praying before his Army*. The priest is asking for victory, his hands uplifted, and his hosts are all kneeling, their heads bowed down to the ground. In contrast with the hazy yellowish tone of the desert and the pale blue of the sky are the masses of glowing colours of the Oriental rugs and costumes. The art critic, Signor Primo Levi, said of him:

With his admirable technique, Morelli still arouses admiration in a period of art like the present, in which a host of chromatic researches after colour succeed and contradict each other, and it is interesting to know that even in 1855 he saw in colour the problem of light; but he is not restricted to the narrow field of graphic art; he takes his place in the vaster and nobler field of thought.

Morelli's influence on other Neapolitan artists was considerable, but not altogether for their good. His personality was so strong that it destroyed that of his pupils, who did good work as long as they followed his manner, but failed when they tried something on lines of their own, although before coming under his influence they had given much promise. In fact, although many painters of the Neapolitan school are clever and paint pretty pictures, not one of them can be called a great artist. Their colouring is sound and they succeed in the *genre* style, but they have little power of composition, and their figures are weak.

Every other part of Italy has its own school of artists with its distinguishing characteristics. But they tend mostly towards vivid realism, and impressionism has many devotees. In the North, the Socialist movement has found its way even into the world of art, but whatever may be its merits from a political and economic point of view it certainly does not produce good painting. Venetia has perhaps a more flourishing art school than other parts of the country. Signor Ettore Tito is one of its leading lights. He paints scenes of Venetian life very delicate and sober in form, simple in composition, sunny, and living. Signor Nono is a more ambitious artist and goes in for larger works with a deeper human interest. His colouring is rich and effective, and his drawing correct and bold, but he is not strong in composition. One of his best pictures is the *Refugium Peccatorum*: a girl who has sinned is prostrated before an image of the Virgin to whom she is offering flowers. The scene is at Chioggia, under a dark and threatening sky, lit up here and there by a lurid sunset; in the background, a grey stone balustrade, and the green waters of the lagoon beyond. The idea is excellent, but the result is not altogether satisfactory. There are too many objects—statues, balustrades, boats, sails, fishing-tackle—that distract one's attention from the central *motif*. This defect is characteristic of most of Signor Nono's work.

In Central Italy there are two schools of paint-

ing—the Tuscan and the Roman. The former is represented by the brothers Gioli, Signor Fattori, Signor Cecconi, etc., who paint horses, cattle, *contadini*, and the pleasant rural landscapes of Tuscany. They are good draughtsmen, but their colouring is somewhat dull and grey. Rome has produced at least two artists of real merit, Giovanni Costa and Aristide Sartorio. Signor Costa's exquisite landscapes of the blue Mediterranean, the Carrara mountains, the stone pines of the Pisan littoral, the mellow golden foregrounds near the Arno's mouth, the sunsets of the Roman Campagna, are too well known in England to need more than a passing mention. He is, in fact, more popular in this country, where he has many pupils and devotees, than in his own. Signor Sartorio began as a painter of religious subjects and was much influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite school, having studied in England. But of late years he has changed his manner and taken to painting scenes of the Roman Campagna. He tends to grey-blue stones and a sober peaceful atmosphere. His figures are most carefully drawn, as are in fact all his details.

In one of the wildest and most remote districts of the Abruzzi, far from all civilisation, lives and works Francesco Paolo Michetti, the apostle of realism in art. Strictly speaking, he belongs to the Neapolitan school, for it was at Naples that he made his first studies; but he has little in common with the dreamy and poetic imaginings of

Domenico Morelli, or the pleasant sunny landscapes and *genre* scenes of Casciaro or De Nittis. He is far more in sympathy with some of the realistic French painters. His subjects are chosen from the sordid lives and evil passions of the Abruzzi peasantry. He is in art what Verga is in literature, or D'Annunzio, when he wrote *San Pantaleone*. His great picture *La Figlia di Jorio*, for which he received a medal at the first International Exhibition at Venice, is a powerful composition, full of vivid realism and masterly technique. In other works, Michetti has painted flocks of sheep, with patriarchal shepherds, horses, cattle, religious processions, fanatical idol-worship, love, jealousy, and revenge. In all, the background is formed by the rugged mountain scenery of his native province.

Another painter of mountains, though very different in every way from Signor Michetti, was the late Giovanni Segantini. He was undoubtedly one of the greatest painters of modern Italy, but he was so original in every way that he can hardly be said to belong to any school at all. He developed entirely on his own lines, and had had practically no artistic education. He knew hardly anything of the old masters, and very little of modern painters. Born, in 1858, of humble parentage in the Trentino he was brought up chiefly at Milan and in the neighbouring country. For a few years he was a swineherd on a Lombard farm; then he returned to Milan where he had a few lessons in drawing.

But he owed little to his masters; for what he learned from the conventional and unoriginal teachers of the Milan Academy, he afterwards did his best to forget. His first pictures were *genre* scenes, figure pieces, and still life studies. In the early eighties he retired into the Brianza (near the Lake of Como) where he devoted himself to the study of nature. During four years he painted rural and pastoral subjects, somewhat in the style of Millet, and he already showed a great delicacy of feeling combined with powerful originality. His *Ave Maria a Trasbordo*, *At the Tether*, *Early Mass*, *One More*, are all full of exquisite tenderness and pathos. From the Brianza, he went farther afield, and settled for a time at Savoguino in the Grisons. Then he began to paint those strange Alpine scenes with which his name is associated. It was a bold thing to attempt, as every other painter who had tried to portray the glaciers and eternal snows of the mountain world had failed. But he succeeded, and produced a series of beautiful works, representing the different phases of Alpine life—the hard toil of man and beast, the sudden storms, death and sorrow, the rocks and the brilliant flowers, the whole overawed by the massive ranges of snow-clad peaks. To produce the luminous effects of that rarefied atmosphere, he resorted to the so-called “divisionist” system, which consists in laying the colours separately on the canvas, leaving the eye to blend them instead of mixing them on the

palette. During the last years of his life, which were spent in a *châlet* on the Maloja Pass, he painted many pictures of a symbolic nature, suggested by the wide expanses of winter snow and the mystery of the rocks. Of these, *Sorrow Comforted by Faith*, *The Unnatural Mothers*, *The Punishment of Luxury*, *Love at the Fountain of Life*, are among the best known; but the first is, I think, the most beautiful. But even in his most fantastic imaginings, his landscape remained always intensely real. His last work of all was the great triptych painted for the Paris Exhibition of 1900. It sums up the whole life of man, beast, and nature in the Engadine; the three panels are called, respectively, *Life*, *Nature*, and *Death*. While he was engaged in giving the finishing touches to this composition up on the Schafberg, eight thousand feet above the sea level, he was taken ill, and died, in the midst of the scenes he had loved so well, at the age of forty-one. It is too early as yet to say what influence he will have on modern art, as he died almost as soon as he began to be known and admired.

Although Italy has lost that absolute primacy in music which, as far as concerns the opera, she once enjoyed, her position in the musical world is still no mean one, and the works of many of her living composers, not to speak of the late Signor Verdi, are well known and admired in all countries. I have already alluded to the love of opera in the Italian public. Chamber music,

symphonies, string quartets, have never flourished in Italy, and if a few composers have occasionally written music of this description it has seldom proved strikingly original. The operas which are heard on the modern stage include many of the older composers—Donizetti, Bellini, Rossini, and Verdi's early works. The opera-going public never tire of *La Traviata*, *Il Trovatore*, *Norma*, *Lucia*, *I Puritani*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, or *Ernani*. On the other hand, operas by the older German composers, such as Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven are never performed. Wagner is now appreciated, and his works are frequently given at Milan, Bologna, Turin, and Rome.

Of the modern composers, Signor Verdi is undoubtedly the greatest. Although he is now dead his influence is still very considerable, and he is essentially a writer of to-day. Of his earlier works it is unnecessary to speak. They belong to past history and the story of his development from a writer of brilliant *cavatine* and grand *arie* into a serious composer whom the most exclusive Wagnerians cannot despise, is well known to all who are in the least interested in music. To the last period of the veteran composer's life belong three great works: the beautiful Requiem Mass performed for Manzoni's death, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*. *Otello* is perhaps Verdi's masterpiece. Its libretto, no longer written by the feeble poetasters who are responsible for Verdi's first operas, is by a true poet who is himself a composer—Signor

Arrigo Boito. Save for two episodes, it is taken entirely from Shakespeare, and a most skilful compilation it is. In *Otello*, Verdi reveals himself a complete master of characterisation; the music of the different characters is thoroughly introspective, and makes clear their every thought. There is the fierce barbarian in Otello's *Pel cielo, già il sangue mio ribolle!*—all the jealousy, the hatred, the vengeance, which were to come later, are suggested in this passage. In the "Credo," we understand the cringing, servile nature of Iago combined with his fiendish wickedness, and his music in the duet with Otello analyses the foul insinuations he is making. In the farewell to glory in the second act, Otello's sobs show us how much he was abandoning, while in the agonising scene with Desdemona we have the hopeless, helpless despair, continued in the heroine's exquisite "Willow" song and in the Ave Maria. The tragic last scene of the opera closes with a reminiscence of the love duet. All through this great work Verdi shows that, although still inspired with a fund of rich melody, he can also be a scientific composer. His orchestration is everything that is most modern. His last opera, *Falstaff*, is indeed an astonishing piece of work, not only because it was written by an old man of eighty-one, but because the music is quite different from that of any of his other operas. If his previous works are divided into two or three orders, *Falstaff* is an order all by itself. Verdi,

who had never written a comic, or even a light, opera before, save the unsuccessful *Finto Stanislao*, in his old age produced a work which is pure comedy from beginning to end. The libretto, also by Signor Boito, is taken from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, with a few passages from *Henry IV*. The whole opera is bubbling over with merriment and melody, providing one more instance of Verdi's marvellous power of combining pleasing *motifs* with scholarly orchestration and counterpoint. There are so many melodies that he does not know what to do with them. He throws them about by the score, never exhausting any one, but just suggesting it and passing on to something else. Yet every idea is fully developed, and the same *motif* is insisted upon and repeated when necessary. It is the music of laughter and conversation and wit, for Verdi has completely mastered Shakespeare's humour and set it to exactly the right kind of music.

Of living authors one of the most notable is Signor Arrigo Boito, the writer of Verdi's *libretti*. As a composer, his reputation rests on one work alone—*Mefistofele*. But in spite of the smallness of his output he has exercised considerable influence on his contemporaries. He is a man of good family and of considerable wealth, and has never had to work for his living. He began as a *littérateur* and journalist, and only took to writing music comparatively late in life. His *Mefistofele* was produced in 1868 at Bologna, and proved an

utter failure. He then re-wrote it entirely, and in 1875 the new version was performed also at Bologna. This time it met with success, and has since become a favourite with the Italian public, although it is seldom heard abroad. The libretto is inferior to those which the author wrote for Verdi, and is lacking in unity. But the opera itself is full of fine music, and the instrumental part is magnificent. Some scenes are good in themselves, but incapable of being acted. The *Classical Sabbath* is dramatically a mistake; but it contains some charming passages, such as the exquisite "Doridi Silfidi," in which we seem to realise all the dreamy poetry of classical mythology. Since the second *Mefistofele*, Boito has been engaged on a new opera, *Nerone*, of which the libretto was published last year. But Signor Boito is very critical of himself, and constantly re-writes what he has written without ever being satisfied. It is doubtful whether he will ever produce his new work.

Signor Mascagni, from being orchestral director to sundry third-rate opera *bouffe* companies and the author of some half a dozen obscure pieces, suddenly became one of the most popular composers in Italy, if not in Europe. His reputation rests, like that of Signor Boito, on one opera alone—*Cavalleria Rusticana*. This work burst upon the world like a bombshell, and took the theatre-going public by storm. Undoubtedly it is a very clever piece of writing. The libretto is

most dramatic and Mascagni shows himself fully able to do justice to the thrilling situations of the play. The music is melodious and unconventional, and much of the orchestration is interesting and well written. On the other hand, there are passages here and there which are far from original, and some which are vulgar, notably the "Brindisi." *Cavalleria* was a success from the beginning, and was applauded even in Paris at the height of the anti-Italian agitation. Unfortunately this success turned the composer's head. Unlike Boito, he was not content to rest on his laurels, and instead of devoting himself to study and hard work, he turned out a series of operas, each more uninteresting than the last. *L'Amico Fritz* had a certain *succès d'estime*, but it has not stood the test even of a few years. The libretto founded on Erckmann-Chatrian's village idyl is very feeble and quite unsuited to Mascagni's music. Where delicate and simple treatment seemed indicated, he produced crashing brasses and banging drums. The overture, in fact, is suggestive of battle and murder and sudden death, so that the peaceful scene in the inn parlour, which follows it, is distinctly an anti-climax. The only genuine inspiration is in the pretty "Cherry" duet. The rest of the opera is a jumble of tortured phrases, weird changes of key, and purposeless noises. Then followed *I Rantzau*, another subject taken from Erckmann-Chatrian, an equally inane libretto, equally noisy and absurdly unsuit-

able music. Both these operas have now ceased to be performed in any Italian theatre, and may be regarded as failures. Mascagni's next production was *Tris*. The libretto, which is on a Japanese subject, evinces the most complete ignorance of everything connected with the Land of the Rising Sun, and is moreover grossly indecent. The music contains a few good passages, but is full of plagiarisms. Hearing it for the first time, one recognises nearly every tune. His latest work, *Maschere*, which was heralded forth with all the aids of the advertiser's art, and brought out simultaneously in six different towns, proved a complete fiasco in every one of them. It is extremely difficult to pass judgment on a composer who has produced one really good short opera followed by all this mass of poor stuff.

Giacomo Puccini comes of a musical family, and his talent was early appreciated, while he was at the Milan Conservatoire, by composers like Boito and Ponchielli. His first opera, *Le Villi*, founded on a weird Northern legend, contains much excellent music, and in spite of its Southern character is at its best in the supernatural parts. Next came *Edgar*, which, although it has some good points, was less favourably received. The libretto is weak and the music somewhat noisy and affected, especially in the orchestration. *Manon Lescaut*, which followed, is a far abler and maturer piece of work. The third act is particularly fine, and the whole opera is very melodious. Manon's

music, however, has been found fault with on the ground that it is too serious and tragic for the Abbé Prevost's frivolous heroine. Puccini's greatest success is *La Bohème*. The libretto, founded on Murger's *La Vie de Bohème*, tells of the lives and loves of Quartier Latin artists and poets. The story is quite unsuited to the operatic stage and is not well constructed. There is no connection between one act and another, and there is no apparent reason why the opera should not end with the first act, or continue indefinitely after the last. The music is full of charming passages, and here and there evinces genuine inspiration and power. But it suffers from the faults of the libretto, and is more like a collection of jottings from the note-book of a great master than a finished opera. It is exceedingly popular in Italy and has been the round of every theatre in the country. It has been well received abroad. His last opera, *La Tosca*, is decidedly inferior to *La Bohème*,—the plot, founded on Sardou's extravagant play, is more suited to a Transpontine stage than to Italian opera, and the music is noisy and uninteresting. But Signor Puccini is a composer of great promise, and in all his work there is evidence of study and genius. His style is capable of much further development, and we may expect far better work from his pen in the future.

The last of Italy's young composers is Ruggero Leoncavallo. After many years of failure he achieved success with a little two-act piece called

*Pagliacci.* It has a dramatic plot and is skilfully constructed. It is the best of the operas which owe their existence to *Cavalleria Rusticana*. But that is about all that can be said for it. It is entirely lacking in originality, full of "reminiscences," and commonplace throughout. Leoncavallo's next and more ambitious attempt was an historical opera called *I Medici*, founded on the story of Giuliano de Medici's love for La Bella Simonetta and of the Pazzi conspiracy. The best part of the music is the orchestration, which is intelligent and beautiful, and descriptive of the different characters. But the opera lacks inspiration and is full of the most palpable plagiarisms. Passages are absolutely copied from Wagner, Verdi, Schumann, and Meyerbeer. The whole scheme was a failure, and the composer's subsequent works have done little to establish his reputation.

Of the Italian composers of non-operatic music the Abate Perosi and Signor Sgambati are the most remarkable. The Abate Perosi is the author of several oratorios and other sacred pieces, which have been very favourably received in the musical world, although their character precludes their ever becoming popular with the ordinary public. The first was *The Resurrection of Lazarus*; it was followed by *The Resurrection of Christ*, and by several other similar works. The words are taken entirely from the Bible, each performer singing the words assigned to some person in the

Sacred Book, while a sort of Greek chorus sings all the narrative part. The music is melodious and the orchestration scientific. Signor Perosi's works deserve to be better known abroad than they are. Signor Sgambati is one of the best pianists in Italy, and it is in that character that he is chiefly known. But since he came under Liszt's influence he has taken to composing in earnest, and is the author of several pianoforte pieces, some quartets, quintets, and symphonies, an octet, and an overture, all of which are attractive and show mastery of modern methods, although none are of striking originality.

Modern Italian music, as a whole, shows considerable vitality; if the new school has not as yet produced any composer of overwhelming genius, and much of its work is crude and immature, it contains many writers of intelligence, and promises well for the future.





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